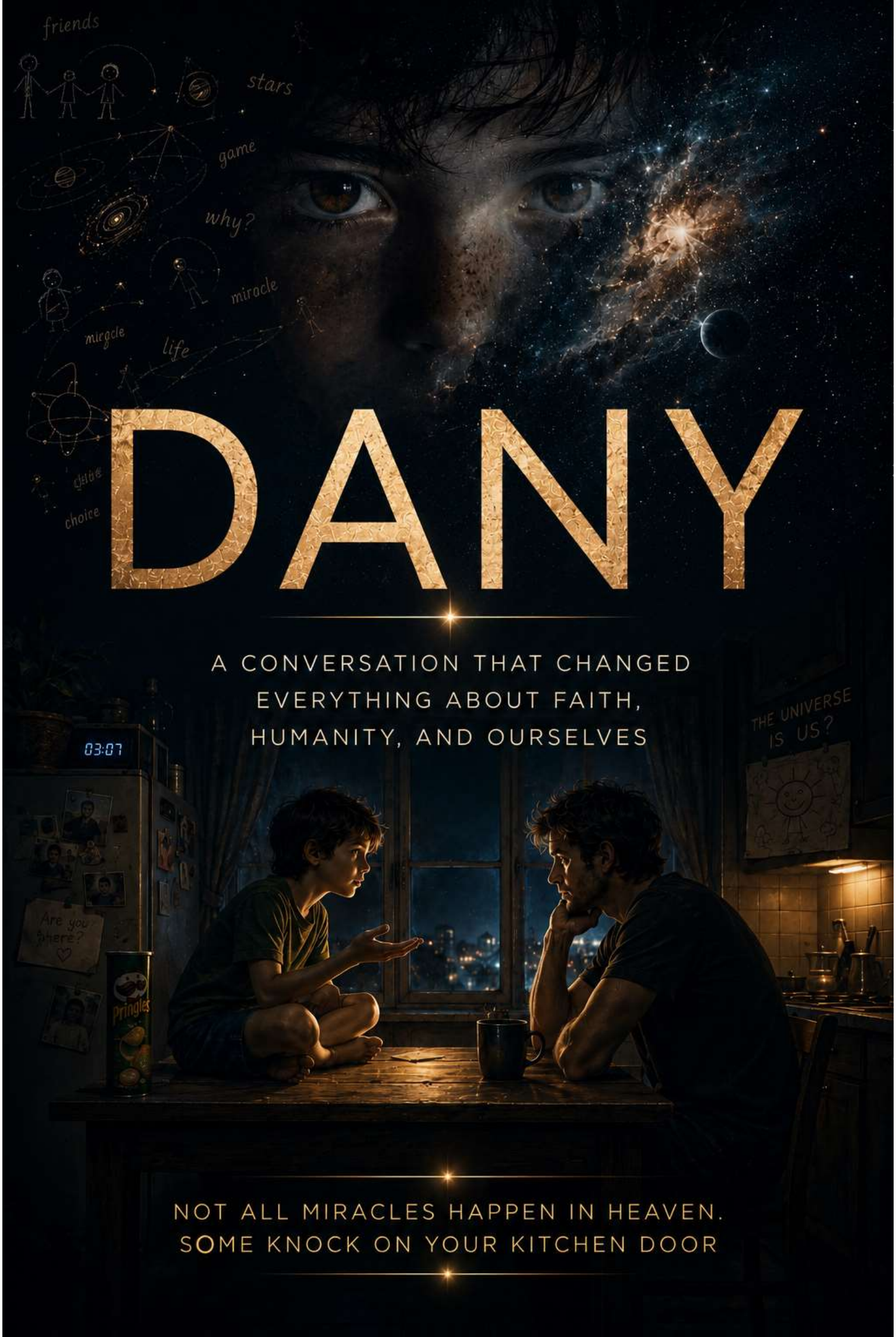
friends
stars
game
why?
miracle
miracle
life
choice
DANY
A CONVERSATION THAT CHANGED
EVERYTHING ABOUT FAITH,
HUMANITY, AND OURSELVES
03:07
THE UNIVERSE
IS US?
Are you
here?
Pringles
NOT ALL MIRACLES HAPPEN IN HEAVEN.
SOME KNOCK ON YOUR KITCHEN DOOR

Dany
by 3:07

License:

This work is licensed under a **Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).**

You are free to:

- **Share** — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format.
- **Adapt** — remix, transform, and build upon the material (including creating audiobooks, podcasts, or translations).

Under the following terms:

- **Attribution** — You must give appropriate credit to the author (**3:07**).
- **NonCommercial** — You may **not** use the material for commercial purposes.

Summary:

When all the lights in your life go out and the future turns into a narrowing corridor ending in a medical death sentence, the time comes for one last conversation. But who will answer your cry of despair?

At three in the morning, in an ordinary kitchen filled with shadows and the hum of an old refrigerator, the protagonist meets the one people call the Creator. But instead of a formidable judge, he finds a ten-year-old boy in a wrinkled T-shirt, happily munching on potato chips.

This is a story about the greatest deception in human history. About how we invented a harsh, unforgiving God to justify our own cruelty, forgetting the One who created the stars just for the sake of a game.

What if the way out of a dead end isn't submission to the end, but an invitation to the most exciting game in the Universe?

Table of content

Chapter 1 4
Chapter 2 5
Chapter 3 7
Chapter 4 8
Chapter 5 10
Chapter 6 12
Chapter 7 13
Chapter 8 14
Chapter 9 18
Chapter 10 23
Chapter 11 33
Chapter 12 33
Chapter 13 37
Epilogue 44

Dany

Chapter 1

Do you know what despair is?

Sometimes, things are deeply wrong. Physical pain, betrayal, loss. We're used to calling it a "rough patch." But despair is different. It's when the light in your life goes out, and you realize the switch has been torn out by the roots. Nothing can be fixed. There is no more future, only a narrowing corridor with a blank wall at the end.

You know how it goes? They shuttle you from office to office for a long time. First the GP, then specialists, then endless waits for ultrasounds. Then they take tests. They send them to some lab in another city—because "only they have the right equipment."

Then a week passes, and you get a call. The voice on the other end is polite, almost sympathetic. They say the tests got lost. Sorry, they say—human error—we need to redo them. In reality, nothing was lost. The result simply came back positive, and before stunning you with the final verdict, they want to run a second test to be absolutely sure.

And then, when the confirmation arrives for the second time, you realize: this is it. The countdown has begun.

For the first couple of hours after the news, I tried to bargain with fate out of sheer habit. "Well, it happens to everyone," an inner voice whispered. But as the shadows deepened, the realization hit harder: all my plans—the ones that, only yesterday, gave me a reason to live—were crumbling into dust. Like a house of cards someone had knocked over just for the hell of it.

And I knew exactly who that "someone" was. I stared into the empty corner of my bedroom and saw Him there. The One who could have stopped this, but didn't. On purpose. In cold blood.

"Happy now, you sick bastard?" I rasped into the silence.

My voice broke, fading to a whisper, but a fire was screaming inside me.

"You planned this whole thing, didn't you? You waited. You waited patiently until I'd built a life, until I thought I'd finally found my footing. You gave me hope just so you could tear it away in a heartbeat.

You're no judge—you're a sociopath who doesn't kill the flesh, but hope itself. My death isn't enough for you; you had to destroy everything I got out of bed for first. You're an architect of ruin, rigging the foundation with explosives while the house is still going up. Why? To watch the debris fly? To savor the moment my 'tomorrow' turned into 'never'?"

I crawled under the covers, but they offered no warmth. A cold knot of rage and helplessness coiled in my chest. The entire world outside the window felt like a backdrop to His drawn-out joke.

"If you're there... if you're really what I think you are... then you're the loneliest, most spiteful thing in the universe."

My eyes were heavy with exhaustion. My consciousness began to drift, clinging to one last, almost frantic spark. And just before I finally sank into oblivion, I whispered:

"But if you're not... if there's even a shred of meaning in all this absurdity... give me some small sign of hope."

Chapter 2

If you walk up to a very small child and ask, "Listen, when did you first appear?", they'll most likely look at you with total bewilderment and answer, "I've always been."

I remember being baffled by things adults said, like: "Well, that was before you existed," or "Back when you weren't around yet." What do you mean—not around? How? Here I am; I can feel my hands, I can hear my thoughts, and it feels like it's always been this way. But among the billions of human beings, there is only one for whom this is the absolute truth.

Dany truly had always existed.

For us, with our clocks, calendars, and eternal fear of being late, it's a hard concept to grasp. But for him, time wasn't a river. It was a vast, bottomless ocean, and he could swim in any direction he chose. Throughout that unthinkable eternity, Dany had learned everything there was to know. Imagine: he knew the position of every speck of dust in every galaxy. He knew the velocity of every atom rushing through the heart of a dying star. He didn't need to learn—he simply saw the entire creation through and through, from beginning to end.

He was bound by nothing. Want to be on the other side of the universe? Done. Just like that. It happened faster than a blink of an eye. If he got lonely, he'd create clones—avatars. Hundreds, thousands of Danys, each of whom was himself. He could play hide-and-seek with himself across dimensions. But honestly, it was a pretty lousy game: it's hard to play hide-and-seek when you already know which asteroid your other self is hiding behind.

Like any typical kid, Dany was damn curious. He liked to poke his finger into the void of hyperspace just to see what would happen. Poked one spot — and Bang! A new universe is born.

To us, it's the greatest mystery of the cosmos, but to him, it was just a fun firework show. There go the hydrogen particles, flying in all directions. Dany fiddles with the electromagnetic force a bit—like turning the dial on an old radio—nudges the "strong" interaction just a hair, and voila! The hydrogen begins to clump, ignites with nuclear fusion, and the first stars flare up in the dark. It was beautiful. Like someone had scattered a handful of glowing beads across black velvet.

Dany sat on the edge of infinity, looking over his handiwork. Stars were being born, planets were forming into neat little spheres, and the universe hummed like a massive, whirring computer. Every day he created something new, messing with different settings, and he was genuinely thrilled whenever something interesting happened. Like when two gas giants would collide with a deep, heavy rumble, scattering rings of icy debris everywhere—now that was a real show!

But the more he created, the more a strange pang pricked at his chest. It was as if you'd painted a massive, vibrant picture where everything was just right—the colors were perfect—but something was still missing. The finishing touch. A tiny detail, without which all this splendor felt... hollow. As if you'd built the coolest box fort in the world, dragged all your best toys inside, but had no one to share it with.

And then, Dany hatched a Plan.

He brooded over this Plan for a long time. It wasn't just about "poking a finger into the void" anymore; he wanted to prepare everything for real. In one of the countless galaxies, he spotted a place on the very edge—far away from the noisy quasars and black holes that swallowed everything in sight. He lit a gentle, yellow star there. Nearby, he placed a planet, carefully tuning its orbit so it wouldn't fry or freeze. He filled it with water, mixed the gases for the atmosphere in just the right proportions—he even tweaked the gravity a bit, so the planet was perfect for jumping on.

And then he turned to a microscopic building kit. Dany began to assemble structures—tiny, invisible to the eye, but incredibly complex. He rigged them with a clever mechanism: they could sustain themselves and, coolest of all, divide.

That was how the first residents arrived in his world. At first, they were just tiny critters you wouldn't even notice. But Dany was curious, so he cranked up the process. Soon, rabbits were hopping through the grass, kittens were meowing in the woods, and horses were charging across the plains. They were a blast. You could pet them, feed them from your hand, and watch them get all spooked by thunderstorms (which he set off himself, just for kicks).

But Dany knew: rabbits didn't cut it. You can't tell a kitten how you dreamed up a new nebula in Orion's belt the night before. A horse isn't going to appreciate the beauty of thermodynamics.

Dany set out to do something he hadn't done in all of eternity. He decided to create An Other Boy.

Not another avatar who just echoed his own thoughts. He needed a real, separate "someone" with a mind of his own. Someone to spar with. Someone who could say "no," or come up with a game that Dany would never have thought of himself. He needed a kindred spirit, but one who lived by the rules of this tiny planet.

He had never created anything so unpredictable before. And, honestly, he was a little spooked.

Chapter 3

I woke up in the dead of night. I'm not sure what exactly jolted me from my thick, heavy sleep—a sound, or maybe just the instinct of a creature that senses the end is near.

For a while I lay still, listening to the hollow silence of the apartment. Then, a rustle came from the kitchen. I froze. "Just an illusion," my mind helpfully suggested. The remnants of a dream, the creak of an old floorboard shifting with the temperature... In old houses, something is always creaking; it's just physics.

I felt for my phone on the nightstand. My fingers were cold and clumsy. Without unlocking the screen, I just tapped the power button. The glowing digits seared my eyes: 3:07.

The sound again. A creak. Clear and rhythmic, as if someone had shifted their weight from one foot to the other.

Fear is a strange thing when you've already been handed a death sentence. You'd think—what is there to fear for someone who's on their way out anyway? But the body lives by its own laws. I got up, trying not to make a sound, and moved toward the noise. The hallway seemed endless, and the darkness in it felt too thick.

Someone was standing by the table. A dark silhouette against the window.

My heart leaped into my throat, pounding a frantic rhythm. Instinctively, I slapped the light switch with my palm. A harsh, surgical light flooded the kitchen, momentarily blinding me.

After that, everything was a blur. A boy was standing at the table.

He looked about ten, with a mop of long, dark hair and brown eyes filled with a strange, unchildlike calmness. He was wearing a simple green T-shirt and denim shorts. A regular kid from next door, if not for one thing: he wasn't supposed to be here.

Silence fell. My mind had already processed the scene: the guest wasn't armed, wasn't hiding, and wasn't attacking. But my adrenals, ignoring all logic, continued to pump massive hits of adrenaline into my system. I started to tremble.

The boy watched me with curiosity, his head tilted to one side. In his right hand, he clutched a tube of my favorite bacon Pringles. Completely unfazed, he pulled out a single chip, popped it into his mouth, and crunched away with gusto.

"Next time, get the sour cream and onion kind, okay?" he asked, as casually as if we were going over a shopping list on a Saturday afternoon.

The shock began to slowly recede, leaving a ringing void in its wake.

"Will do," I managed to exhale, surprised by how compliant I sounded.

"I love these things," the boy added with a smile. It was simple and open, like a kid who had swiped a treat and knew he wasn't going to get in trouble.

I stayed where I was, leaning my shoulder against the doorframe. My legs held me up, though a strange quivering had taken root in my knees.

The boy paid no attention. He acted as if we were old friends who had stayed up late. He began to talk—quietly at first, then with growing enthusiasm, jumping from one topic to the next.

As if in a trance, I listened to this strange tale of the universe—of unthinkable galaxies that looked like spilled ink, and of multiple realities layered upon one another like a tiered cake. His voice was clear and childlike, but the words... the words he spoke sounded hauntingly mature coming from a child's lips.

"Kid's got quite an imagination," flashed through my mind. My brain clung desperately to a comforting thought: he was just lying. A gifted little sociopath who'd broken in and was now spinning me a yarn to keep me from calling the cops. A classic defense mechanism. He was waiting for me to laugh or kick him out, and then he'd just vanish into the night.

But he just kept on talking. He gestured with the hand clutching the Pringles tube, occasionally letting crumbs fall onto the table without noticing. At some point, he got so wound up that he started talking about planets not as dots in the sky, but as if they were his own little DIY projects.

"See," he said, licking the seasoning from his fingers, "stars are easy. That's just physics. Poke it, light it, and it burns for millions of years. Total snooze-fest. The hard part started when I decided I needed someone... well, real. Not like me. Someone else."

He went quiet for a second, looking right through my kitchen wall—into that very eternity he'd just been blathering about.

"I practiced for a long time. First there were the rabbits, the horses... but they weren't it. And then I decided: I'm going to make a Boy."

Chapter 4

Dany was incredibly nervous. Even though he could see into the future and knew everything would work out, his chest still tightened with anxiety. This was the first time in all of eternity he had undertaken something like this. Wouldn't you be nervous in his place?

At last, the preparations were complete. Dany used the organic matter already at hand on the planet, but he worked with it the way a jeweler works with the rarest of gems. Carefully, with a peculiar, aching love, he molded every tiny part: weaving the vessels, nestling the internal organs, and building the neural network of the brain—that intricate labyrinth where the first thoughts would soon begin to race.

Right before the final step, Dany tenderly moved the still-lifeless body into the deep, cool shade. He didn't want the boy to be frightened or blinded by the harsh midday sun the moment he opened his eyes. Everything had to be perfect.

"Okay. This is it," he whispered to himself, his heart pounding in his chest. "I'll call you Adam."

Dany leaned over and breathed a spark of life into the still chest—that very "soul" that thousands of books would later be written about. And Adam took his first real breath.

It worked!

The boy opened his eyes. There was no experience in them yet, only pure, crystalline curiosity. He stared at the one sitting beside him.

“Hi!” Dany smiled broadly and gave a little wave. “I’m Dany.”

“And I... I’m Adam.” His voice was quiet and unsteady, but certain.

“I know,” Dany chuckled. “I’m the one who made you.”

“What do you mean—made? When?” Adam tried to move his fingers, examining his own body.

“Just now! You’ve only existed for a few seconds.”

“Really? And before that... was I just not anywhere?”

You might ask, of course: how did Adam start talking the second he came into the world? How did he even know the words? Well, how does a newborn fawn stand up on shaky legs and walk just minutes after birth? How does it know what to do?

Adam’s arrival was nothing like the way children are born today. It was only later that human nature would change, becoming bound by rules and submitting to harsh laws—the very laws that Dany could never stand. But that moment was still several years away.

But for now, Dany just sat in the shade of the trees, experiencing something entirely new. It’s one thing to know the theory—and he knew it all the way to the end of time—but it’s quite another to feel it for yourself. The warmth of another living thing. The gaze of another being. The joy of no longer being alone in this vast universe.

And how Dany beamed when he realized he’d pulled it off! Imagine being absolutely alone for an entire eternity—and then, suddenly, you have a friend. A real one. Someone alive.

Dany’s plan was a total success: the boy turned out to be fantastic. He was the spitting image of Dany himself, except for a mop of blond hair and eyes the color of a summer sky. Dany had planned it that way—he didn’t want a carbon copy. He had no interest in cranking out more avatars. He could churn out as many of those puppets as he wanted, but you couldn’t actually play with them.

After all, every avatar was just himself. It’s like trying to beat yourself at chess while sitting in front of a mirror: you always know exactly what move your opponent is going to make, because that opponent is you. In a game like that, there’s no thrill, no surprise, no life. Just sheer predictability.

But with Adam, everything was different. He was created in Dany’s image, but he was far from a mirror reflection. Unlike those soulless copies, Adam had a “Self” all his own. He had his own quirks, his own fears, and—most incredible of all—his own mind.

He even argued with Dany! Can you imagine? A being who’d only been alive for a couple of days trying to tell the one who exists beyond time and space that that cliff over there would look better if it were painted burnt orange, or that racing a cheetah was only fair if you did it on all fours.

And Dany absolutely loved it. He would laugh until his sides ached when Adam stubbornly held his ground. This was exactly why he had started this whole complex experiment with the planet: sincerity, unpredictability, and the chance to hear someone else’s “no.”

Dany was truly happy. Before this, he had only created toys. Yes, they were beautiful. Stars and planets whirling in a magnificent cosmic dance. Giant

galaxies—vast, swirling clouds of glowing dust. Quasars, the towering beacons of the universe, shining brighter than billions of galaxies combined. He loved smashing matter together, watching as space itself streamed toward the center of mass, forming what people would later call “black holes.”

It was thrilling. All of it belonged to him—from the boundless cosmos to the bizarre quantum world, where he, Dany, was the sole eternal observer. But in all this splendor, there was a void that no quasar could fill. He had no one to share it with.

And now, he had a friend.

The whole Earth belonged to them—to Dany and Adam. Together, they came up with silly jokes, had noisy wrestling matches in the high grass, and raced each other to the lake for a swim. And they argued. Oh, how they argued! Sometimes they even had a falling out. For real, ending in proper pouting. But those spats never lasted long—in Eden, grudges didn’t take root.

They fell asleep under the open sky, and before bed, Dany would whisper to Adam about the distant worlds he’d created, letting his only friend in on the secrets of the universe. And one day, Dany realized that he had existed for all eternity just for this moment. All the beauty of the cosmos—all those magnificent pleiades and towering constellations—paled in comparison to Adam. Now, the center of his universe wasn’t the radiant heart of a galaxy, but this blond-haired boy.

For him, Dany meticulously shaped every hill, created cool rivers, emerald grass, and the most beautiful animals. Eternity itself was split into “before” and “after.”

One day they came out into a clearing that Dany had prepared in secret. Adam froze, not believing his eyes.

“Is that grass?” he asked, crouching down. “But why is it so... multi-colored?”

“Those are flowers, Adam,” Dany answered proudly.

“Flows?” the boy asked back.

“I called them flowers, Adam, because they are where my favorite colors flow together. Great, isn’t it?”

Chapter 5

“So... Wait-wait-wait...” I raised a hand, signaling him to be silent. My head was throbbing. “Are you trying to tell me that you are...”

The boy froze with a chip in mid-air, watching me expectantly. In the kitchen silence, the only sound was the hum of the fridge.

I simply couldn’t utter the word. It got stuck in my throat, seeming too heavy, too pompous for this crumb-spattered kitchen.

“Well, you know... The...” I trailed off, feeling like a complete idiot. Then, fumbling for words, I choked out a church cliché: “The... I Am.”

The boy rolled his eyes and snorted.

“Look, what’s with the theatrics?” He set the tube aside. “You’ve already figured it out. I can hear your thoughts—right now they’re as loud as a fire alarm.”

“Right,” I muttered, trying to claw back even a shred of sarcasm. “The Omnipotent, Omniscient little squirt. With chips.”

“It’s always the same,” he sighed, not at all offended. “I can take any form I want. I could be a grown man with a stern face, or a woman. I can turn into any beast. I could even be a burning bush!” The boy’s eyes twinkled mischievously. “People still haven’t lived that joke down—they’re always searching for some hidden meaning in it. But this version... the one you’re seeing now... this is the real me. It’s how I’ve always been, and how I’ll stay forever. You see? I just don’t grow up. I don’t need to.”

I opened my mouth to let fly another biting remark, but the words caught in my throat. My mind was racing, clinging to a single thought: “This is a joke. A stupid prank. There’s a hidden camera tucked behind a kitchen cabinet somewhere, and this little actor just memorized his script perfectly.” I even scanned the corners of the room, looking for the glint of a lens. Things like this just don’t happen. I was standing in my own kitchen, taking a ten-year-old completely seriously and discussing metaphysics. Either the kid’s acting was phenomenal, or I was losing my mind from all the stress and illness, and this was nothing but a highly realistic delusion.

“Alright, let’s say you have a spectacular gift of persuasion,” I crossed my arms, trying to force a look of cold skepticism back onto my face. “And you’ve prepped damn well. But if I play along with your fantasy... So... God is a boy?” at last, I managed to say the word out loud. It sounded flat and surreal.

“Who else would I be?” He looked genuinely puzzled. “Some fearsome old man with a beard? Like, I’m just sitting there on a cloud, all gray and ancient, doing nothing but looking for someone to smite because they farted in church? Seriously?”

“I still don’t believe you,” I cut him off. “You know what, kid? If you’re truly the Creator of the Universe, prove it. Right here, right now. Show me a divine miracle.”

The boy stopped swinging his legs and looked at me.

“Do you like parlor tricks?” he asked quietly. “Say I make this mug float. You’ll still immediately start looking for a rational explanation. Magnets, holograms, hidden springs... Any street magician can show you that. Heck, even if I make a gigantic, glowing whale swim through the clouds right above your house right now—you’ll just assume it’s an advanced laser show, a billboard on a blimp, or simply a rare atmospheric phenomenon. You adults always protect your boring logic.

Instead, let me remind you of the summer when you turned nine. The evening you climbed the old apple tree, slipped, and badly banged your knee. You sat in the grass, smearing tears across your dirty face, terrified more than anything that your mom would scold you for tearing your pants. Remember what you whispered into the dark back then, squeezing your eyes shut? ‘Please, let no one notice. Please, let it heal by morning.’”

I froze. A cold sweat instantly broke out across my back. No one in the Universe knew about that silly, childish incident. Absolutely no one. I had never told my mother, my friends, or anyone at all. It was my own private, completely buried memory. The defensive walls of my skepticism suffered their first major crack.

“I patched up those shorts for you back then,” he winked at me. “And by morning, your knee didn't hurt at all. You just decided it was all a dream.”

He fell silent, keeping that carefree smile, while I felt the final remnants of my familiar world collapse into the kitchen silence. Arguing was useless; denying the obvious was foolish.

“Alright,” I sighed, realizing this conversation had taken a completely surreal turn. “And what am I supposed to call you? Oh, Almighty Creator?”

“Why make it so complicated?” the boy shrugged carelessly, peering into the package. “I mean, humans have thousands of different names, titles, and designations for me. Most of them are terribly boring. But my friends just call me Dany, and I like it. Keep it short and simple.”

I stayed silent, trying to wrap my head around the image: Eternity in a pair of shorts and skinned knees.

“But if you are... like this,” I gestured around the kitchen, “then where did all these lists of sins come from? All these ‘thou shalt nots,’ the punishments, the ‘hellfire’? You just wanted a friend. Why make everything so complicated? Why drive him out of the garden?”

Dany sighed and rustled the package, fishing out the last chip. His face became serious for a moment, almost sad.

“It’s a long story,” he said quietly. “You see, when you have ‘Someone Else,’ sooner or later you realize that you cannot possess them completely. The falling out didn’t start because of an apple. Apples are a trifle. It all started because Adam decided he was all grown up.”

Chapter 6

Dany believed that this summer—their endless summer in Eden—would never end. But time, which he had once set in motion out of mere curiosity, began to work against him.

When the Earth completed its twelfth orbit around the sun, Adam began to change. At first, it was subtle, but by the thirteenth circuit, his friend was unrecognizable. He wanted to be bigger. Stronger. A deep voice, a heavy stare, and alien thoughts. Adam sat on the shore more and more often, looking at the stars not with wonder, but with cold calculation. He no longer wanted to race cheetahs or listen to Dany commanding the birds to sing.

“This is stupid, Dany,” he snapped one day, without even glancing at the latest miracle. “These are just kids’ games. Don’t you ever get tired of it?”

Dany tried to talk. Really talk, like they used to.

“But why, Adam? I can make any world you want. Do you want me to remake the sky? Do you want me to create new creatures so you won’t be bored? Do you want me to make the fish sing in a choir right now?”

Adam turned around. There was no anger in his eyes, only the infinite weariness of an adult looking at a child.

“Here, I’ll always be nothing but your shadow,” he said quietly. “In this perfect garden of yours, I’m just a prop. I want to live my own life. Do you understand? On my own. Even if it hurts.”

Dany froze. It occurred to him that with a single wish, he could have Adam back exactly as he was. With one thought, he could rewire the neural connections in his friend’s brain and return him to childhood forever. They could go back to hiding in the ferns, breathless with laughter.

All Dany had to do was snap his fingers. But he didn’t.

He understood that if he did, Adam would cease to be Adam. He’d turn into just another avatar—forever obedient, forever predictable. That wasn’t the kind of friend Dany had dreamed of. He didn’t need a puppet; he needed a Friend.

For the first time in all of eternity, Dany felt utterly powerless. He could command galaxies, he could extinguish suns, but he could not win back his friend without destroying his personality. It was a new, sickening feeling. Powerlessness.

And then Dany made the hardest decision of his life. He decided to leave this world to Adam. To leave him the Earth, the sun, the flowers, and the right to make his own mistakes.

And then—he walked away.

Dany was alone again. And it was... unbearable. Much worse than it had been before Adam’s creation. Before, he hadn’t known what it was like to love and be loved. Now, he knew. And the ringing silence of an empty universe became his greatest torment.

Chapter 7

A heavy silence hung in the kitchen. A street lamp reflected dimly in the window, and in its glow, the boy looked both real and completely out of place. I stared at him, trying to wrap my head around the fact that sitting right there before me was the reason for all existence.

“So... there was no expulsion?” I managed to ask, my voice raspy. “No snake? No apple? You just... walked away?”

Dany sighed, twirling the empty tube in his hands.

“Left? Yeah. But it wasn’t out of spite. I just had no one left to talk to. Have you ever tried playing hide-and-seek with someone who doesn’t want to look for you anymore? It wasn’t about resentment; it was the end of meaning. I left Adam to his ‘adulthood,’ his fences, and his right to be himself. And I... I just closed the door behind me.”

I swallowed. My illness, my fear, all this fuss with laboratories—it all suddenly seemed like an echo of that very ancient separation.

“And where have you been all this time?” I asked. “So many centuries have passed... Why didn’t you come back? We asked, after all. So many prayers, so many temples built...”

Dany suddenly straightened up, and irritation flared in his eyes—not an angry kind, but a sort of annoyed one, like a master whose work has been hopelessly misunderstood.

"Prayers?" he snorted. "Listen, do you people ever think about what you're doing? Why do you never lift your face to the sky? I'm right here! Who told you that when talking to me, you have to bow your head and show me the back of your neck? And you're lucky if it's just the back of the neck."

He gave a dry smile, looking down at his bare feet.

"Some people even fall face-down on the floor and... Do you even realize I'm looking down at you? And you shove your butts in my face and start mumbling into the floor: 'Our Father, Howard be thy name... give us this day our jelly bread…'. Do you seriously think I enjoy looking at that? I created friends, but I got an endless parade of the backs of heads."

Chapter 8

Dany wept bitterly. For the first time in all eternity, his tears were real—salty and searing. He sat alone in the middle of his vast, hushed cosmos, remembering their happiest days.

"Adam, close your eyes!" Dany was practically bouncing with impatience, preparing yet another surprise.

"Is it some kind of new food again?" Adam asked, laughing as he closed his eyes tight.

"Aha! How do you always guess?"

"Well, you made me this way yourself," Adam grinned slyly. "I'm smart and I'm curious."

"Then open your eyes, you curious smarty-pants!"

In Dany's palm lay a handful of bright red berries that smelled like sunshine and summer.

"And what is it called?"

"You tell me. Come on! Give it a name."

Adam carefully took one berry, turned it in his fingers, and answered confidently:

"Stray-berry!"

"Ahaha, why 'stray-berry'?"

"Well, look—potatoes grow in the ground, but these berries just stray right on top of it. See? Some even got dirty, just like the potatoes."

"Alright then," Dany howled with laughter. "Let's go with strawberry."

"Not strawberry, stray-berr... actually, you know what? 'Strawberry' sounds great too. Let's stick with that."

"So we named it together!"

"Exactly!"

That was so long ago.

The Bible wasn't lying—Adam really did live for 930 years. But the sacred texts forgot to mention the most terrible part: for nearly all that time, he was a frail, shriveled old man.

In Dany's original plan, Adam's mind was meant to stay eternally young, developing forever until it rivaled his own. But in the world of "adult rules" Adam had chosen, everything succumbed to decay. His mind grew brittle, his senses dulled, and his memory turned into a dusty attic. One day this gray-haired old man—someone you'd never recognize as that blue-eyed boy—pleaded for his youth.

But there was no way. In the world of rigid laws Adam had built around himself, time could not be reversed. By then, thousands of his descendants had also chosen "adulthood," and changing reality for everyone would have meant stripping them of their free will—turning them back into obedient avatars.

"I'd rather never have been born than be like this forever," Adam rasped in a fit of bitterness.

And then, Dany did something that ran counter to his very essence as a creator. He created Death.

It wasn't a punishment. It was the only way to release Adam from his worn-out body and take him back—into the realm where eternal youth still awaited them. Dany unleashed decay upon the world—the very thing that would later be called the Second Law of Thermodynamics. It was the only way to save those who trusted him from an eternity of suffering inside a grotesque shell.

Dany came to Adam on his last earthly day. The old man lay on the ground, frail and withered, his dry eyes fixed on the sky.

"You came..." he whispered. "I thought you had forgotten me."

Dany sat down in the dust beside him, gently taking the fragile, wrinkled hand into his warm palms.

"I never forgot you, Adam. I was waiting until you wanted to come home."

Adam smiled faintly.

"I do. Take me back to our lake."

Dany leaned close to his ear and whispered, "Close your eyes. Just like back then, when I showed you the flowers."

And Adam obediently closed his eyes, leaving the world of sorrow behind forever.

And then, to maintain the sequence of events—since in the world of sorrow there was no escaping logic—Dany, the absolute master of reality, rewrote the very origin of this world.

He pulled off an incredible trick: he rewrote the past from the present. Consequently, even if you were to build a time machine and travel back into the farthest reaches of antiquity, you would never find the Garden of Eden. In this new, "adult" reality, it simply never existed. Instead of the divine breath of life, you would find millions of years of ruthless natural selection, random mutations, and a slow, agonizing evolution that only produced reason after aeons had passed.

Scientists call this retrocausality. Experiments have already confirmed that at the quantum level, the future can alter the past, but the human mind is too linear to

grasp it. Dany simply reshaped the world retroactively so that humanity could feel like the master of its own fate in a world where everything made sense.

But before he did, he carefully saved a “backup copy” of his universe—along with the sun and the primordial Earth—in an alternate reality. And there they remained: beautiful and empty.

How can I describe Dany’s True World?

In that world, no one knew suffering. It was a realm of absolute abundance, where plants were more than just flora—they were active participants in life. They grew food for people of their own accord, offering up sweet, succulent gifts specifically to be eaten. Dany called them “fruit.”

Fragments of that True World have leaked into our current “world of sorrow,” though only in a limited, stunted form. You see it in the very symbiosis that allows plants and animals to trade oxygen for carbon dioxide. Or in the way cows willingly give their milk to us.

But if you think everyone in the True World was a vegetarian, you’re dead wrong.

The truth is, some species of animals—mostly non-mammals—also shared in this great exchange. They gave parts of their bodies to be eaten freely and without pain. It was just like a tree giving an apple: the animal shared its flesh, and the loss regenerated in minutes. No pain, no fear—only pure energy and the joy of providing for a friend.

The entire magic of this True World was rooted in its foundation — in the code that Dany had once meticulously pieced together with his own tiny fingers. In our current world of sorrow, DNA is just a fragile set of instructions that constantly gets tangled, breaks down, and loses its letters under the heavy blows of time. But over there, in Dany’s world, the molecule of life was an absolute, unbreakable monolith. It held exhaustive information about the entire organism all at once. Each cell was not merely a brick, but a perfectly accurate copy of your body's master blueprint.

Because of this, it was physically impossible to die of old age or remain disabled in the True World. If a person or an animal lost a finger, or even an entire limb, it caused no irreversible tragedy. The mutilated body would instantly read the reference code from the remaining cells and, within minutes, grow back what was lost — matching the Creator's original design to a T.

Pain worked in a completely different way there, too. In our world of sorrow, pain is always synonymous with suffering, because the dark shadow of irreplaceable loss and a looming end constantly stalks right behind it. But in the True World, pain served as nothing more than a sensor. It was a regular information signal that calmly and casually told your consciousness: "Hold on a second, we're just finishing up the regeneration, checking it against the blueprint, and then you can run off."

But in the "cringe" copy of the world, due to all-consuming entropy, this incredibly complex system shrank and simplified down to a harsh, primitive minimum — simply so that this distorted world could function at all without crumbling into dust. In this stripped-down reality, DNA lost its former memory. And now, the absolute maximum our crippled nature is capable of is a broken bone

knitting back together, or a minor scratch on a leg sealing over with a thin layer of new skin, leaving behind a faint scar as a reminder.

And the sacred gift turned into brutal predation. What was meant to be a voluntary offering became a bloody hunt. Flesh was taken by force. Animals were slaughtered for food. The very idea of living at the cost of another became the foundation of this new reality—one that Dany watched from the sidelines with a quiet, heavy sadness.

But his beautiful world didn't stay empty for long. Little by little, it began to fill.

Adam was the first to return. And what a joy it was—to see him young again, with that same unclouded gaze, free from the burden of nine hundred years of weariness!

Then came Abel. And soon, more and more of those who had been unwillingly swept into the "world of sorrow" began to find their way back to Dany. They started building this world alongside him—a world that was genuine, true, and happy. Dany was no longer the sole creator; now he had a host of co-authors. Together, they dreamed up new games, built cities that would never crumble, and composed music that sets the forests blooming.

Dany looked at them and realized: none of it had been for nothing. Every tear shed in solitude in the heart of the cold cosmos was worth it for this moment. Now, his universe was full of friends, and the game promised to go on forever.

For a while after Dany's departure, the memory of him in the world of sorrow remained alive. Adam's descendants were born exactly as Dany had intended—in his image and likeness. That same curiosity shone in their eyes, and the world around them felt like a boundless playground.

But it didn't last. They stayed that way only for the first twelve years of their lives. Then, as the Earth completed its twelfth orbit around the sun, a frightening transformation would take hold. Their bodies stretched, their features hardened, and their voices broke, becoming alien and low. It was as if some invisible program inside them had forcibly switched the mode from "play" to "survival."

Along with their bodies, their thoughts changed.

Little by little, the bright, mischievous image of Dany was crowded out of the human mind. It was too hard for them to believe in a Boy-God when they themselves were becoming heavy, serious, and mortal. They needed someone who would justify their own severity.

And so, they began to paint Him. They invented a God in their own image: someone as old, frail, and crotchety as they were becoming. He was depicted as a fearsome patriarch with a flowing gray beard, perched on a cloud and clutching lightning bolts—an uncompromising judge waiting for the slightest mistake to strike. Thus, "Dany" turned into "the Lord of Hosts," and joy and laughter were traded for fear and prostration.

You might ask: but isn't Dany old? After all, he has existed for an eternity. Doesn't that make him the most ancient being in all of creation? Perhaps he is just a withered old soul in the body of a child? It's not for nothing that some books call him the "Ancient of Days."

But there is a logical fallacy in that line of thinking.

In Dany's ideal world, age isn't determined by how long you've already lived. That's a meaningless number. Age is determined by how much time you have left. Isn't that logical? The closer you are to the end, the older you are.

But Dany will exist forever. What remains for him is infinity—a total that never decreases. And that means he is an eternal child. Just like all his friends. Old age is merely the shadow of Death, and where there is no Death, the old simply do not exist.

Chapter 9

I was silent for a long time, processing what I'd heard. I looked at my hands—dry, with veins standing out. By this boy's standards, I was an ancient man—not because I'd lived thirty-odd years, but because my "remainder" was vanishing before my eyes. At least, that was the verdict from some lab on the outskirts of town.

"So we're the ones who aged you?" I finally asked. "We painted a beard on you just so it wouldn't be so pathetic to grow old alone?"

Dany nodded, kicking his legs back and forth.

"You simply forgot how to look up. You started staring at the ground, chasing profit and building hierarchies. It's easier to obey an old man than a friend. You can fear an old man. You don't have to play with him; you just have to make sacrifices and hope he doesn't strike you too hard with a lightning bolt."

He reached for the tube, peered inside, and—seeing it was empty—set it back on the table with a sigh.

"But the irony is that inside each of you, that twelve-year-old kid I once made is still sitting there. He's buried under layers of 'seriousness,' 'responsibility,' and wrinkles. He's crying out; he wants to run to the lake, but you don't hear him. You call it a 'midlife crisis' or 'nostalgia,' but in reality—it's just a memory of the True World. Everything is completely different out there in my world," Dany smiled dreamily, staring at the dark window pane. "We're always coming up with something new. You know what we do when the first fluffy snow falls and the sky turns crystal clear?"

"What?" I asked, caught up in his excitement.

"Oh, it's our favorite, absolute blockbuster of a show! The whole crowd of us—we pack into these huge, incredibly awesome double-decker buses with panoramic glass roofs. We blast the music at full volume, grab a ton of chips and sodas, and tear off out of town, straight into the mountain foothills.

Dany waved his hands, drawing the massive scale of it in the air.

"Picture this: dead of night. The buses pull over right on the shoulder of an empty road. Everyone spills out, huddles up by the roadside, wraps up in blankets, drinks hot cocoa, and waits. And then it starts... On cue, hundreds of massive hot-air balloons launch into the ink-black sky—all painted, glowing from the inside with hot fire. But the coolest part is the sky itself. I tweak the atmospheric settings, and this unbelievable, blazing golden aurora pours over the snow-covered mountain

slopes. Billions of sparks swirl through the air like a glowing blizzard, and the firmament literally melts into pure gold! Everyone's shouting, clapping, the balloons floating right through the light... It's the kind of earthly yet cosmic miracle that completely steals your breath. Honestly, I look forward to those trips like crazy. But that's nothing! Last time, for my birthday, the kids came up with something completely mind-blowing—they put together a massive surprise behind my back. While we were out, they slipped back early and planted our entire meadow, right in the middle of the snowdrifts, with glowing flowers!"

I froze for a second, trying to process what I was hearing.

"Hold on..." I turned to him. "Your... birthday? God has a birthday?"

"Well, yeah," Dany shrugged, as if talking about the most mundane thing in the world. "We celebrate on December twenty-fifth."

I opened my mouth to speak, but the boy whipped around to face me and narrowed his eyes reproachfully, clearly catching my thought mid-flight.

"Oh, please, spare me the adult whining about how the date was picked completely out of thin air, how it's historically inaccurate and tied to some winter solstice! When else am I supposed to celebrate it? Besides, it's fun. The kids tease me about it all the time anyway. They're like, 'Dany, what a raw deal—it's your birthday, but we're the ones who get all the presents!'"

I felt something tug deep inside me. That very "locked-up boy" within me suddenly raised his head, responding to his words. A lump formed in my throat. After all, I too had once looked at the sky and waited for a friend, not a judge.

"So we ruined everything..." I said quietly. "We turned you into a monster to justify our own darkness."

Dany looked at me, and his gaze was suddenly unbearably heavy, not at all childlike. He hugged his knees, pulling them up to his chin.

"You have no idea how much you ruined," his voice trembled. "Do you want to know when I got truly terrified? When I realized you were ready to kill the ones you love, simply because you pinned your own cruelty on me."

He fell silent for a second, staring into the emptiness of the kitchen as if he saw ghosts from the past there.

"There was this man..." he began, and his childish voice suddenly turned chillingly serious. "Abraham. He was a decent enough guy until he started going crazy from his own fanaticism."

Dany sat there, hugging his knees, looking so incredibly small.

"He'd just gotten drunk and started hearing voices," Dany said quietly. "And when he sobered up, he got it into his head that it was me who'd spoken to him. He took his son—Isaac—and led him up the nearest mountain to... to slaughter him. I had to intervene at the very last second to stop him."

Dany hitched a shaky breath and swallowed the lump in his throat.

"And that was far from the only time he lost his mind. When Isaac was just a tiny thing, Abraham convinced himself that I was demanding his son's only friend as a sacrifice. A little lamb. Isaac had raised it from the moment it was born—he loved it, slept curled up with it... and then his father tells him: 'Kill it. God demands a sacrifice. This is a test.'"

Dany's eyes grew wet; tears glinted in the light of the kitchen lamp.

"Isaac called the lamb over. And it... it was so fluffy, so trusting. It nuzzled his palm with its nose," Dany sobbed, his shoulders heaving. "Isaac was wailing, begging the little one for forgiveness. Whispering: 'I don't want to, I can't, but God commands it...' And... well..."

Dany covered his face with his hands and began to cry—honestly and bitterly. I stared at him in bewilderment, and only one thought, silly and out of place, kept circling in my head: "Can God really cry like this? Can the Almighty be so inconsolably sad?"

Dany snapped his head up, catching my gaze. His face was streaked with wetness, and his eyes were full of pain.

"Yes, I have feelings too, imagine that!" he snapped through the tears. "And they're far stronger than yours. You call me almighty, but I am helpless when I face such things. Believe me, it was easier to create an infinite Universe than to deal with human stupidity."

Tears rolled down his cheeks, dripping onto his green T-shirt.

"Do you know how many times Isaac later dreamed of the bleating of that dying lamb? He remembered it for the rest of his life. And he feared me until the day he died. The me that I never was."

Dany wiped his eyes with the back of his hand, but the tears just kept coming.

"Is he... is he alright now?" I asked quietly, trying to banish the image of a crying child with a knife in his hands.

"Oh, Isaac's doing just fine," Dany said, sniffing. "Do you know who the first one to meet him was, back in my universe, when his time finally came? That same lamb. All white and fluffy, prancing around him like nothing had even happened... But do you have any idea how many lunatics throughout history have seen me as some crazy old geezer?"

The boy's voice cracked again.

"They seriously believe I commanded she-bears to maul small children! Can you imagine? They write in their books that I blessed the slaughter of entire cities, sparing not even the infants. And in the same breath, they pin a hypocritical commandment on me: 'Thou shalt not kill. Unless I say so. Then, you kill without a second thought.'"

I didn't know what to do. It was all beyond me. Before me sat a little God, sobbing his heart out, and my own heart was breaking for him. I could feel his despair in my very skin—it felt denser and heavier than my own illness. Before me was no stone-faced cherub, no saint with a halo, but just a regular kid.

So I did the only thing I could think of. I went over and put my arm around him, trying to comfort him the way you'd comfort a younger brother after a backyard scrap. He pressed his forehead against my chest, and I realized then just how fragile he really was.

"You know," Dany whispered, having calmed down a bit but not pulling away, "they'll hate you too. For telling them about me. They'll call you a blasphemer and a heretic."

He raised his tear-streaked eyes to mine.

“In their eyes, you’ll be committing an assault on the most ‘sacred’ thing of all: their invented, spiteful old man. They aren't just mistaken; they want me to be like that. It’s convenient for them to believe I created a hell where I cast out anyone who doesn't fit in. They fly into a rage when they realize I was never a tyrant. Do you know why? Because they’re like that themselves. Give them even the tiniest taste of power, and they immediately start making life a living hell for everyone else. So they invented me in their own image. And they don't get better at all when they find out that God is just a boy.”

I stayed silent, holding him close. That night, in my old kitchen, the world shifted on its axis once and for all. I had asked for hope for myself, but in the end—I had become the hope for the one who crafted the stars.

“So... there’s no hell after all?” I asked softly, still feeling the warmth of his shoulder against mine.

Dany sighed, and it was a sigh heavier than any ten-year-old should ever have to carry.

“Oh, there’s a hell,” he answered. “But they built it themselves. I told them: ‘Desire for others only what you want for yourself.’ Well, they did desire it... for others. Understand? They built it out of their thoughts, their fears and curses.”

“So... they end up falling into the very hell they dreamed up for their neighbor?”

“Exactly. You reap what you sow. Remember? That wasn’t a threat—it was just a statement of fact about how their world works.”

I sat there thinking, staring at the reflection of the streetlamp in the dark window pane.

“But why, Dany? Why would they even want that? You’re so... awesome. And yet they choose to live under the thumb of a tyrant in a cage of their own making. Why?”

“Do you know what the ‘devil’ is?” Dany asked, locking his eyes on mine.

“Well...” I fumbled for an answer. “He’s a monster, I guess—if you believe the books. Lures you into doing bad things, runs hell... hooves, tail, the whole bit.”

“Aha. And where did he come from?”

“Well, according to the Bible, God created him. He was a good angel at first, and then...”

“And I—or rather, the ‘God from the Bible’—supposedly had no clue he was going to go bad?” Dany arched an ironic eyebrow.

“Yeah... something doesn’t add up there,” I agreed.

“Listen,” Dany leaned forward. “He really does tempt people. And he really does run that hell of theirs. But it’s not a person. It’s not some monster in a dungeon. It’s a swarm intelligence, spawned by humanity itself.”

I frowned. “How so?”

“It has no ‘Self’ of its own. It’s a massive neural network, the foundations of which were laid by Adam when he built that first fence. And the ‘neurons’ of this network? They’re the people themselves. Each of you lives your own life—drinking coffee, going to work—never even suspecting that, in those moments, you’re just a single cell in a giant organism. This organism evolves, develops, and conquers new

territories. It’s like an anthill: an individual ant doesn’t understand the master plan, but the whole swarm acts as a single, crushing force.”

Dany fell silent, choosing his words.

“It has no physical form. Like a virus, it needs hosts. And unfortunately for you, there are always billions of them available. If you think that billions of Homo sapiens can’t succumb to madness all at once, just look at history. The witch hunts of the Middle Ages—thousands of people sincerely believed they were doing a good deed by burning their neighbors. But you think you’ve gotten smarter since then?”

He gave a grim smile.

“Think of the Germans in the thirties. One of the most educated, cultured nations on earth turned into a mass of madmen in just a few years. These were the same lovely people who loved music, poetry, and philosophy. But their brains were simply plugged into the network. The swarm woke up, and individuality vanished.

You see, the Collective Devil is just playing a shell game with you guys. And foolish adults think there’s some kind of important struggle going on between countries, religions, or fractions. Someone is on the right, someone is on the left, someone wins, someone loses... But in reality, it’s just the cups of a single swindler. All he wants is for you to believe the fight is real and jump into the brawl. The moment you choose a side in this stupid mess—that’s it, you’ve lost, this Swarm swallowed you whole. The funniest part is that the Collective Devil itself is a total hypocrite, even though every single fool inside it might sincerely believe he’s fighting for a just cause. The only way to beat a swindler is to simply refuse to play his game.”

I sat with my head bowed, feeling the flush of heat rise to my face. Do you know what I felt at that moment? Do you think it was fear? Not at all.

I felt a painful, childlike shame.

When I’d been screaming my “Happy now, you sick bastard?” into the void, I was certain I was cursing some pompous, ancient deity with infinite delusions of grandeur. I was at war with the image of a haughty despot just waiting for an excuse to hurl a lightning bolt or send me to eternal torment in the fires of Gehenna. But this boy...

I didn’t fear the wrath of a despotic being. What could it do to me? Hell? Is hell not a life under the constant surveillance of a being ready to punish every rebellious thought? But I absolutely didn’t want to hurt a child. The thought that this boy had heard my poisonous words and taken them personally burned me more than any imaginary hellfire.

Dany didn’t seem offended at all. He crossed his legs and dangled one foot in the air.

“Don't sweat it,” he said, shrugging it off. “I’ve heard much worse. People have a habit of projecting their worst traits onto me and then getting offended by them. Funny, isn’t it? You build your own cages and then get mad at me because it's a tight squeeze.”

He suddenly giggled, covering his mouth with his hand.

“If you only knew what I got up to in the Krishna avatar... Oh, those were some fun times! Modern-day prudes would probably reach for the belt if they’d seen

it. But that was the True Game. Then you ‘adults’ came along and turned everything into boring paragraphs and never-ending rules.”

I froze, struck by a sudden insight. The shame had receded a bit, giving way to a strange, feverish curiosity.

“So... you came back? You’ve been here before? And Jesus... was that you, too?”

Chapter 10

Joseph was a man of quiet and toil. His world was built of the scent of fresh shavings, the texture of Lebanese cedar, and the honest callouses on his palms. That night, sleep wouldn't come. The air in the room felt electric, and the shadows on the walls seemed to take on a life of their own.

At some point, reality simply splintered. The walls of his house didn't vanish, but they became translucent, like thin ice. Joseph felt that he was being watched—not from the outside, but from the heart of the silence itself.

“Who’s there?” he whispered in terror, pressing his back against the mat.

And suddenly, a clear, ringing child’s voice answered him, and a warm wave washed through the room:

“I am God. And I want you to be my father.”

Joseph’s skin crawled. A cold sweat blurred his vision. How could this be—God? He knew the sacred texts; he’d heard of the fearsome voice from the burning bush, of the thunder on Sinai, of the visions of the prophets... But no one had ever said that God was a child. “I’m losing my mind,” the thought pounded in his head. “It’s a delusion. A dream. Or some cunning spirit has decided to mock a lonely old man.”

And the moment Joseph thought this, the world around him fell away. Before his mind’s eye, a vast expanse opened up—a space so immense that his mind reeled at the impossibility of containing it.

In a single heartbeat, he saw it all: endless star fields, galaxies like shimmering dust, and new worlds unfolding beyond the very edge of the universe. They were beyond counting, and in every one of them, life pulsed. Joseph felt a primal, bone-deep awe. It wasn’t just a fear of power; it was the realization of a staggering, cosmic scale.

And then came a ringing certainty: the one who spoke to him had truly created all of this. He was greater than all the worlds that had just streaked before the carpenter’s eyes. The Creator was not just “out there”—He was here, in this room, and He was waiting for an answer.

Joseph fell prostrate, covering his face with his hands.

“Lord!” he choked out into the dust of the floor. “I am but a speck of dust before you. Who am I? How can a simple man like me be your father?”

“Don’t diminish yourself,” the calm, child’s voice replied. There was no anger in it, only boundless support. “You are not a speck of dust. You are made in my

image, just like Adam. Like everyone I have called into this world. One day, you will grasp what I know. But for now... just let me in."

Joseph listened, holding his breath. Dany had come to Earth before in various guises, but in those times, he had always remained fully himself—he remembered who he was and where he'd come from. This incarnation, however, was meant to be different. The most important. The most profoundly human.

Dany had planned the unthinkable: he wanted to live his first twelve years as an ordinary child. He needed to experience for himself everything a person feels before the transformation into adulthood begins. He wanted to leave his greatness behind—to forget it entirely—so he could truly become one of us.

But to wake up at the right moment, he needed a guide.

"Yes, Lord..." Joseph was almost weeping, overwhelmed by a feeling for which there was no name. "Tell me, what must I do?"

"Give me a name—a common name in these parts," the ringing voice replied. "And when I turn twelve, speak the words I will now reveal to you. They will awaken my true self. My human mind will remember who I really am."

Dany spoke ten words. On their own, they were simple, yet they held the music of creation:

"Sun. Moon. Earth. Sky. River. Fire. Water. Grass. Stone. Tree."

"Guard them well, Joseph. This exact order is vital. If you miss even one, or switch them around—the awakening will not happen. I must hear them the moment I turn twelve. Not a day earlier, and absolutely before the Transformation begins in me. Promise me you won't forget."

"I promise," Joseph exhaled, searing each word into his memory like a brand into wood.

"Then hurry," Dany's voice grew quieter, a near-human vulnerability flickering through it. "I am already made flesh. I'm waiting for you out there, behind the shed. The night is cold, Joseph... don't let me freeze."

The vision collapsed in an instant. Joseph jolted, as if waking from a deep sleep. The silence in the house was deafening. What was it? The delirium of a lonely old man? A trick of the mind? Or had the Creator of Worlds truly spoken to him? There was only one way to find out.

Joseph feverishly threw on his cloak and ran out into the yard. The night truly was biting. The world around him seemed frozen: no crickets sang, no dogs barked in the distance—even the wind was afraid to stir the dry grass. The shed stood thirty paces from the house, dark and motionless.

Joseph ran toward it, his heart pounding in rhythm with the ten words he whispered to himself, terrified of losing them along the way.

"Right behind the shed..." Joseph repeated like a mantra, stepping out into the chilly blue of the yard.

Luck was with him: it was a moonlit night, and every stone cast a sharp, jagged shadow. Joseph cautiously peered around the corner of the shed. At first, it looked empty—just old boards and a pile of straw. But looking closer, in the farthest corner, in the cramped gap between the clay wall and the leaning fence, he caught a flicker of movement.

Joseph stepped closer, and his heart stopped.

Could it be?

There, huddled against the cold clay, sat a very small boy. He looked no more than three years old. The child was exactly as Dany had described himself in that blinding vision.

“So this little one... is God?” the wild thought flashed through his mind.

The boy raised his head. His eyes were brown, deep, and surprisingly clear for a child left out in the night. He didn’t cry; he wasn’t afraid. He simply reached out his tiny hands to Joseph, and something inside the old carpenter gave way with a snap. After all, this was exactly the kind of son he had secretly dreamed of all his long, lonely life.

Joseph dropped to his knees right there in the dust. Without a shadow of a doubt, the toddler pressed against him, seeking warmth. The carpenter quickly shed his heavy tunic and carefully—as if wrapping the most sacred of treasures—bundled the boy in it. Then he scooped him up and hurried back into the house.

Thousands of questions crowded Joseph’s head, tripping over one another. Who was this child? Could he truly be the Creator of Worlds? And what if all this was just a delusion, the dream of a lonely man—and the boy had simply wandered in from the night or been left by someone hoping for a mercy?

But the most central, most earthly question burned him the most: what was he supposed to do now? What do you feed such a fragile creature? He needed to find some milk... and he needed it now, at the first break of dawn.

Entering the house, Joseph set his burden on the bed and looked the boy over once more by the flicker of the lamp. He was struck again by how beautiful the child was: silky hair, clear skin, and that profoundly trusting gaze. The boy didn’t utter a word, but in his silence, there was more trust than in a thousand speeches.

Pressing against Joseph’s chest, feeling the strong, steady beat of his heart, the little foundling immediately closed his eyes and fell asleep. And the carpenter sat beside him, not daring to stir, whispering the ten words that had now become more important to him than life itself.

Twelve years flew by like a single day, filled with the scent of shavings and the sound of a child’s laughter. Joseph drank deep from the cup of fatherhood: he rejoiced at Yeshua’s first steps and caught his breath in wonder when the boy first stammered the word “Papa.” For the neighbors and village busybodies, Joseph had a tragic story ready—he claimed the boy’s mother had died in childbirth, and they would only sigh in sympathy, watching the old carpenter care for the orphan.

The boy grew up surprisingly bright. From an early age, Joseph taught him the craft of carpentry, and Yeshua picked it up instantly. His small hands held the chisel with confidence, and his eyes shone with a keen interest in every block of cedar. At times, Joseph forgot WHO he was looking at, seeing nothing but a beloved son in his young apprentice.

But sometimes, at night, Yeshua would wake from strange dreams. He dreamed of stars close enough to reach out and touch, and of voices calling him by a name he no longer remembered. He would wake and call for Joseph. Joseph would sit beside him, stroke his hair, and whisper, “Sleep, my son. You are home. It’s all

right." Yeshua would drift back to sleep, and the visions would fade before the warmth of his father's hand. Joseph kept repeating to himself the ten words seared into his memory.

When the time came to reveal the truth to his son—on the very day of his twelfth birthday, as the shadows stretched long and a heavy sense of the Transformation hung in the air—Joseph called the boy deep into the workshop.

"Yeshua, my boy..." the carpenter's voice trembled. He could feel the fate of the world hanging in the balance.

"Yes, Papa?" The boy raised his clear, dark eyes to meet his.

"The truth is, son..." Joseph swallowed hard. "You... you are God."

The boy's eyes widened in surprise. He froze, his small fingers still clutching a smooth wooden block.

"You're joking, right, Papa?" Yeshua gave an incredulous smile, searching his father's face for that familiar spark of humor.

"No, son. I'm not joking. And I haven't lost my mind. Just... listen to me. Listen to these words."

And Joseph, holding his breath, uttered the password in its exact order:

"Sun. Moon. Earth. Sky. River. Fire. Water. Grass. Stone. Tree."

A deafening silence fell. Yeshua froze. His gaze turned strange—he no longer saw the walls of the workshop or the workbench. As if lost in a thought infinitely distant, the boy looked right through space and time. His face transformed: childlike confusion gave way to a profound, ancient wisdom that did not belong to this world.

A minute passed—one that felt like an eternity to Joseph. Finally, Yeshua blinked and looked at his father again. But his gaze was different now.

"I remember..." he said softly, and his voice now sounded exactly as it had in that distant night vision. "I remember who I am. Papa... I remember coming to you that night and asking you to be my father. And you didn't turn me away. Thank you for that."

Joseph looked at his son with anxiety and a lurking fear. His heart bled: what would happen now? Surely, everything was about to change. The Creator of the Universe could no longer simply plane boards in a humble shop. His son was slipping away into eternity.

But the boy simply walked up and threw his arms around Joseph's neck, hugging him tightly just as he had done thousands of times before.

"Don't worry," Yeshua whispered into his ear. "I remember all the kindness you've shown me. And I will never leave you."

That evening, Joseph remained in a daze for a long time. He moved as if in a fog, mechanically putting away his tools and brushing the sawdust off the workbench. The ten words and Yeshua's whispered reply—"I remembered..."—thundered in his mind like a tolling bell.

Dinner passed in a strange, ringing silence. The boy ate slowly, watching the setting sun through the window; it seemed to Joseph that his son saw more than just a sunset—he saw the very movement of the celestial spheres. When it was time for bed, Yeshua hugged his father as he always did and went behind his partition. Everything was as it had always been. An ordinary evening in an ordinary house.

Joseph lay down, but sleep eluded him. He listened to the night sounds, waiting for the familiar rustle of straw as his son shifted, or the sound of his quiet breathing. But beyond the partition, there was only an absolute, unearthly silence. Not a stir, not a sigh.

A sharp sting of foreboding pierced his heart. Joseph rose, threw on his cloak, and—trying to remain silent—peered behind the partition.

The bed was empty.

The blanket lay undisturbed, as if no one had ever lain there, or as if whoever had been there a second ago had simply dissolved into the night air. No footsteps, no creak of a door—only the open window, with a cold moon peering in.

"Yeshua?" Joseph called—at first only a whisper, as if he were afraid to hear his own echo. "Son?"

He ran out into the yard. The wind hissed through the dry olive leaves, and the moon flooded the world with a deathly pale light. Joseph searched the workshop, peered into the shed, and even checked the well. Empty. The boy had vanished as if he had never set foot in this house over the last twelve years.

The hours crept by, the moon crawling slowly across the sky, but Yeshua did not return. By midnight, the silence of the house had become unbearable.

Joseph went out past the gates again and again, peering into the darkness of the road. Where the village boundaries ended, the black maw of the hills began. From that darkness came sounds that chilled the carpenter's blood: the harsh, maniacal cackle of hyenas and the broken howling of jackals.

Fear—a true, primal fear of a father for his child—gripped Joseph's throat with icy fingers. He was no longer thinking about the "Creator of the Stars." Only one thought pounded in his head: his boy, his twelve-year-old Yeshua, was out there right now, alone, in a world that had suddenly become alien and dangerous.

By morning, Joseph was in a true delirium of grief. All his awe before the Almighty had vanished, giving way to the primal terror of a father for his child. At the first crack of dawn, he rushed to his neighbors. He hammered on doors, seized playing boys by the shoulders, and peered into every face: "Have you seen my Yeshua? Where did he go?" But the people only shook their heads—no one had seen the carpenter's bright young son since the sun had vanished behind the hills.

Returning to the empty house, Joseph collapsed to his knees in exhaustion.

"God, please, protect my son..." he began, but then he stopped short.

A cold chill ran down his spine. He remembered exactly whom he was addressing. The word "God" was no longer distant thunder from the heavens. "God" was his boy—the one who, only yesterday, had asked for seconds at dinner. How do you pray to the one whose sandals are still sitting by the door?

Joseph simply closed his eyes and whispered into the hollow silence of the room:

"Please, son… let me know you're okay. Just give me a sign."

"Joseph!" a familiar voice immediately called from the street.

The carpenter rushed into the yard. Standing at the gate was Jacob, a neighbor and merchant, caked in dust as if he'd just stepped off the road.

“Forgive me, Jacob, I have no time for talk!” Joseph shouted, barely holding back tears. “My son is missing!”

“I know,” Jacob panted, catching his breath. “That’s why I’m here. In the city, at the Temple itself—there’s an uproar. They say some youth is making strange speeches. He’s debating the priests and drawing a crowd; even the scribes are standing there speechless. From the description—he’s the spitting image of your boy.”

Joseph didn’t stay to hear more. He broke into a run, racing toward the city as he hadn’t since his youth.

The Temple was teeming, shoulder-to-shoulder. It was thick with the heavy scent of incense and sweat, and the roar of a thousand voices. Joseph clawed his way through the crowd until he finally saw Him. Yeshua stood upon a dais, where the light from the high windows seemed to pool on his chestnut hair. He was speaking to the people—simply, without pretense—but every word fell into the silence like a stone into a still pond.

And he was beautiful, his son. In that moment, not a trace of the apprentice remained. This was the True Master, returned at last to his long-abandoned domain.

“Yeshua!” Joseph cried out in despair, fighting his way to the front rows.

The boy’s head snapped toward him. And a miracle occurred before everyone’s eyes: in that very second, his face transformed. All that icy, universal wisdom, that ancient power in his eyes—it all vanished. In its place came ordinary childlike anxiety and guilt. Yeshua jumped down from the stone and, followed by the bewildered stares of the crowd, rushed to his father.

He flung his arms around Joseph’s waist, hiding his face.

“I'm sorry, Papa...” he whispered, so softly that only the carpenter could hear.

“Little one, what are you doing to me?” Joseph pressed the boy’s head to his chest, feeling his own heart pounding frantically. “Do you know what I’ve been through? You should be at home, not here!”

“But I thought I was at home,” Yeshua said, looking up at him. “I mean, people say that this is my house, don't they?”

“Come on, son. We’ll talk later.”

They left the Temple, leaving behind the speechless scribes and the low hum of the crowd. Joseph strode along, still barely able to believe that his boy was walking beside him. He felt two completely different men warring within him.

One was a devout Jew who had spent his life trembling before the name of the Almighty. That man wanted to fall prostrate right there in the dust of the road. The other was an earthly father who had spent half the night awake with fear—and who was now barely restraining himself from giving his son a good thrashing for running off like that.

Joseph sighed heavily. He couldn’t find a way to resolve the dissonance in his soul.

“Papa,” the boy said softly, interrupting his thoughts. He was walking a step behind, and Joseph could feel that Yeshua sensed his turmoil. “Nothing has changed between us. Do you hear me? I am still your son.”

They passed through the wealthy quarters of Jerusalem, past synagogues, bathhouses, and mikvahs. Huge hewn stones, gilded roofs, and columns reaching toward the heavens. Yeshua stopped for a moment, surveying all this grandeur.

"So much has been built in my honor..." he said quietly. There was no pride in his voice, only a kind of aching, adult sadness. He fell silent for a moment, then added: "And yet, only one thing is truly needed."

Joseph felt stranger by the minute. He understood that the boy walking beside him with a bowed head was the very One his ancestors had worshiped—the One of the psalms and the Temple sacrifices. But looking at that guilty face, those bare feet in the dust, and the way the boy fidgeted with the hem of his shirt, Joseph felt no sacred awe.

Instead, he was filled to the brim with a boundless, aching fatherly love. He was simply overcome with joy that his little rascal was back, alive and unharmed. Could this truly be the Creator of the Universe? This boy walking along, crestfallen, like any other child who knows he has disappointed his parents.

As they approached their village, the sun had begun to sink below the horizon, staining the world in a thick, almost blood-red hue. It turned the ordinary hills into scenery for some grand play.

"Beautiful..." Joseph whispered, unable to look away. Then he caught himself, a thought flashing through his mind: This boy beside me is the one turning that light right now, choosing the very colors for those clouds.

"Yeah, the view is straight-up Instagrammable," Yeshua suddenly blurted out. He was squinting at the sunset like a master artist checking his finest work.

"A view for what?" Joseph frowned, the unfamiliar word grating on his ears.

"Instagram. It's a thing... well, it *will* be a thing. In the future, people from different villages will use it to show themselves off to one another. But that won't be for a very long time."

Joseph stopped and looked intently at his son.

"Do you know what is to come, son? Everything that lies ahead?"

"Of course. I'm already in the future, after all," Yeshua sighed. "I am in the future, and in the present, and in the past. I am everywhere, and in every moment."

They fell silent. The last rays of the sun brushed the roof of their workshop. Yeshua was the first to run into the yard, becoming once again just a child returning to the familiar scent of wood shavings and warm bread. Finally, they had come home.

Life in the workshop returned to its usual rhythm, but it was the flow of a new river. Joseph lived in a constant, dizzying tug-of-war between his faith and his fatherhood.

"It's beyond comprehension," he said one evening, watching Yeshua deftly shape a tenon on a board. "How am I supposed to pray now? And to whom? Why even go to the Temple? Every year, I used to bring gifts to God for Passover. But who do I give them to now, knowing that you're right here?"

"To me! Me-me-me!" the boy chirped playfully, without looking up from his work. "Bring them to me! I'm crazy about nuts with honey!"

Joseph sighed heavily, though a smile lurked in the corners of his mouth.

“You little rascal.”

“Yep,” Yeshua gave a sly squint, tossing a wood chip into the air.

One night, when the fire in the hearth had burned low, Joseph looked at his son and realized: the Transformation into adulthood was inevitable in this world. The boy’s face was already beginning to lose its soft, childish roundness.

“God or not,” Joseph said firmly, “you will forever be my boy.”

“Yes,” Yeshua answered softly, his voice sounding strange at that instant. “But here, in this reality, I have to grow up. Those are the rules of the game Adam chose. Don’t worry, Papa—it won’t be for long. Back in my world,” the boy pointed toward the stars, “I am always exactly as I am now.”

He was silent for a moment, and a shadow of the sorrow to come flickered across his face.

“You know, Papa… In a few years, you’ll hear that I’ve left this world. Please, don’t be sad then, and don’t worry. I’m simply returning home. We won’t be apart for long. You’ll come to me, too, and you’ll be a boy again. And we’ll be friends. Just friends.”

But before Yeshua grew up completely, many adventures awaited him and his friends in the dusty streets of Galilee.

His childhood friends long remembered the time when young Philip’s sister was cornered by a group of local boys. They had already gathered handfuls of stones, their faces twisted by that same senseless, “adult” cruelty that sometimes infects children. They were ready to pelt the girl just for the fun of it.

Suddenly, Yeshua stepped between them. He didn’t call down lightning; he didn’t even raise his voice. He just stood there—small, but unshakable.

“The first one to cast a stone at her,” he said, looking the leader of the bullies right in the eye, “will have to deal with me.”

And something in his gaze—something that felt like the crushing weight of a thousand dying suns—made them drop their stones and scatter.

But the story that astonished the boys most happened on one of the hottest days of that summer. The whole gang ran down to the Sea of Galilee, escaping the suffocating heat. The water was still and heavy. The boys were fooling around, jumping off the clay cliff, and splashing through the shallows, shrieking at one another.

At one point, Yeshua gave Simon a playful smack on the back of the head, shouted, “Tag!”, and bolted.

Simon, wiping his nose, charged after him. Yeshua wove along the sandspit, luring Simon farther and farther out. Simon was catching up, panting hard and sending up sprays of water, ready to grab his friend by the shirt at any moment. Suddenly, Yeshua veered sharply to the side, ran straight out onto the open water, and, as if it were the most natural thing in the world, dashed toward a fishing boat anchored in the distance.

Blinded by excitement, Simon chased after him without a second thought. He ran at full tilt, kicking his bare heels furiously and raising bursts of sparkling spray. He had no time to look around or think. He saw only Yeshua’s back and the rapidly closing distance. Faster, even faster!

On the shore, Thomas, who had been collecting seashells, suddenly froze, dropping his finds. He rubbed his eyes frantically with his fists, refusing to believe what he was seeing. The rest of the boys grew quiet too, staring out at the lake in stunned silence.

A good thirty paces out from the shore, just as Simon had only a couple of steps left to catch him, Yeshua stopped dead in his tracks. He turned around, squinted slyly at his breathless friend, and called:

“So, Simon... how's running on water treating you?”

Simon drew in a breath for a victorious shout, but skidded to a halt and looked down in confusion. Only now did he truly realize that the sandspit had ended long ago, the shore was far behind him, and beneath his bare feet lay the dark lake depths, several men deep.

In that instant, reality caught up with him. The magic snapped. The surface gave way beneath his feet, and Simon plunged like a stone into the dark water, to the delighted laughter of the boys who had finally come to their senses.

Yeshua burst out laughing, pinched his nose theatrically, and jumped in after him. Half a minute later, they both surfaced, spluttering and gulping for air. Simon, coughing violently, clutched at Yeshua’s shoulder, his eyes still wild as he looked down into the dark watery depths beneath them.

“Well, aren’t you a strange one, Simon,” Yeshua laughed, helping his friend stay afloat in the ordinary human way. “You ran and ran, and then you remembered you were heavy and went straight to the bottom. Just like a rock! A rock—that's what you are.”

The nickname was instantly picked up on the shore. Thomas and Andrew, skipping in the shallows, were already teasing Simon for all they were worth, trying the nickname out every way they could. Simon only snapped back good-naturedly, paddling clumsily toward the shore, but from that day on, he grew even more attached to Yeshua.

Who could have known that years later, the Swarm would pluck this childhood nickname from the disciples’ memories and turn it into the cold granite foundation of its future church...

And of course, the Collective Devil exerted all his strength to erase the true meaning of what Dany brought from human memory. He could not destroy the very essence of Yeshua’s words, but he acted more cunningly: he replaced their form. He clothed the living truth in dry, dead bureaucratic pathos, making it so bleak and uninviting that people simply would not want to open it.

Dany told the people:

“Be like children. Stay children! And then, when your old body crumbles, you will wake up in my True World. You will receive eternally young bodies, and this entire world will belong to you. We will play forever!”

But the people, whose minds were already synced to the swarm, recorded in their scrolls:

“Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not humble himself as a little child, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven”.

Oh, that pathos! To many, the form seems to matter little, as if “becoming a child” and “humbling oneself as a child” mean the exact same thing. But in reality, the difference is monumental. By becoming a child, a person is not “diminished” or “humbled.” On the contrary—they cast off the heavy chains of adult seriousness and ascend to the purity of the Creator. The former is an invitation to freedom and flight; the latter is a command to drop to your knees.

Once, Dany saw his own disciples—imagining themselves self-important gatekeepers—trying to push away a flock of noisy children. He was truly indignant:

“What do you think you’re doing? Why are you driving my friends away? My whole world belongs to them! It’s you—the bearded and the solemn—who need to become like them if you want to be with me.”

But this outburst of living anger was recorded in that same dry, “adult” tongue:

“Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

“Kingdom”... “Heavenly”... Dany cringed at the words. As if he were some pompous despot perched on a golden throne among the clouds. “And that is exactly how they’ll all paint me,” he thought bitterly.

The KD went even further. Desperate to finally discredit Dany, it slipped utter absurdity into the Scriptures. Dany had said: “Whoever loves children—loves me.” But the devilish swarm recorded: “He that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

Anyone who had seen Dany’s eyes even once understood what sheer nonsense that was. The idea that the Creator would force parents to choose between Him and their own children? Such a warped thought could only occur to the mad, or to those who want to turn God into a jealous tyrant.

Dany knew: kings would use his image to justify wars; politicians would use it for manipulation; and scoundrels of every stripe would rake in fortunes in his name for “temples” he would be loathe to even set foot in.

When his friends asked him in alarm:

“Yeshua, how can we preserve everything you’ve said? How do we pass it on to those who come after us?”

He smiled sadly and replied:

“You can't. The Collective Devil is too strong; he won't let the truth pass through the centuries without twisting it. He will turn the beauty of my words inside out. But... there is one short phrase. It is so simple and fundamental that even the devil himself will not be able to erase it. In fact, he will be forced to pass it on as it is, even against his own will. Remember it: **Do unto others as you would have them do unto you**. This is the only law I give you. Everything else is but noise, and of the evil one. He who has even a single ear—will hear it. The deaf—will read it. And he who has a mind—will understand.”

Chapter 11

Silence fell over the kitchen. I looked at the empty chip tube, the crumbs on the table, and this boy who had just wiped out volumes of theology with a single phrase. Outside the window, the sky was turning a bruised blue—the pre-dawn hour, the coldest of them all.

“But they didn’t understand, Dany,” I said softly. “They built the fences anyway. And you... they decided to kill you for those words, didn’t they?”

The boy gave a wry smile and hopped off the stool. He went to the window and pressed his forehead against the glass, looking out at the awakening city.

“Of course they did. Adults don’t forgive those who break their rules—especially when the game is built on fear. The KD went into convulsions when it realized I was teaching you how to be free. They needed a show. A bloody, terrifying, cautionary spectacle. They wanted everyone who looked at me hanging on that cross to shudder and go right back to building their fences.”

He turned to face me. In the twilight, his eyes seemed completely dark, almost black.

“They thought the crucifixion was their triumph. Their final ‘no’ to my world. They tried so hard, hammering in those nails... and I looked at them and thought: ‘Poor, serious people. You have no idea which door you’re opening right now.’”

I felt a chill run down my spine. My own door—the one that had opened before me in the doctor’s office—suddenly stopped seeming so frightening.

“Did it hurt?” I asked.

“Very much,” Dany answered simply. “Being human is painful. But do you know the secret? Pain is part of the game, too. And when it reached its peak, I just knew it was time. But before I left, I decided to leave them a gift. A little glitch in their system of fear.”

He squinted conspiratorially.

“Do you want to know how it actually happened?”

Chapter 12

The crowd roared. The air was heavy with dust, sweat, and that sticky anticipation of blood that the KD loves so much. People stared at the three crosses on the hill, waiting for groans, curses, or heavenly fire. But on the center cross, a strange calm reigned.

Yeshua hung there, breathing heavily. His human body was in agony—he had played his part faithfully to the very end, feeling every spark of pain that any of us would feel. But when his gaze met the eyes of the weeping John or a frightened guard, that same flash of mischief suddenly lit up his brown eyes.

He realized: this was it. The moment had come. His time as an “adult” had run out.

At the very moment the priests began to bellow their dogmas in triumph, Yeshua suddenly smiled. It wasn't the smile of a martyr, but something bright and boyish. He found those who loved him in the crowd, caught their eye, and... he winked.

It was as if they'd planned some grand prank together, and now the best part was finally beginning. With that one gesture, he wiped away the entire horror of the scene. Death was no longer an abyss. It had become a friend.

***

The funeral table was set. A heavy, stifling grief hung in the air, the kind found only in a house mourning its most beloved. Ten men stood outside with their heads bowed, unable to look each other in the eye or take that first step over the threshold. Andrew was the first to steel himself and go inside to check if everything was ready. But not a minute had passed before his hoarse cry, thick with disbelief, rang out from within:

"Brothers! Quick! In here!"

The others, driven by some inexplicable impulse, rushed into the house. They were prepared for anything: an empty room, guards, a ghost. But what met their eyes stripped them of their speech.

A boy was sitting at the table. Brown-eyed, handsome, with that same mop of chestnut hair that was always tangled by the wind. He was wearing a simple tunic, and a familiar, slightly mischievous smile played on his lips. In his hands, he held a large, golden fruit.

"The bakkurots are already ripe!" he said, his voice piercing the silence like a sunbeam. "Sweet and juicy, as if Haziran has already arrived!"

The men stood motionless, paralyzed by shock. They gazed silently at the unexpected guest, afraid to even breathe lest the vision shatter. But deep in their souls, each of them had already understood. Those features, that tilt of the head, the light in his eyes—they remembered it from their very childhood. This was their Yeshua. The same Dany they had once built rafts with and raced to the lake. But they were still afraid to believe. The memory of the nails and the cross was too raw.

"Why are you just standing there, you rascals? Don't you recognize me?"

He jumped down from the bench and came toward them. In that very second, the spell broke. Andrew scooped him up, lifting him high toward the ceiling, while the others swarmed around them in a tight circle. They began to tussle with him, messing up his hair and clapping him on the back—he was warm, living, and real.

"Ow! Aaaaah! Easy!" the boy shrieked with laughter, dodging their bone-crushing hugs. "You're squishing me!"

The friends stared, unable to believe their own eyes. Dany-Yeshua was exactly as they had known him as a child. No scars, no bitterness. Death had indeed turned out to be nothing more than a door to another room—one he had stepped through just to call them out to play some more.

The friends surrounded Yeshua, and the room was filled with an unimaginable din. But in the very corner, leaning against the doorframe, Thomas stood frozen. His face was pale and taunt. He looked at the laughing boy with a kind of agonizing suspicion.

“Well, why are you just standing there, Thomas?” Yeshua squirmed out of Andrew’s embrace and squinted playfully. “Come here, touch me if you don’t believe it. I’m real. See? I even have a splinter in my finger from that old board.”

Thomas approached slowly, his hands trembling. He saw a child before him, but in his mind, the grisly image of the man on the cross still loomed. His “adult” mind screamed that this was impossible—that it was a delusion, a hallucination orchestrated by the Collective Devil.

“It’s not you...” Thomas whispered. “The other one... he had holes in his hands. I saw them. I saw the iron enter his flesh with my own eyes.”

Dany-Yeshua stopped laughing. He looked at his friend with deep, almost parental compassion.

“You’re so foolish, Thomas,” he said softly. “You’re looking for traces of pain where pain no longer exists. Why would I drag nail holes into the True World? I told you: there, we become ourselves again. We become who we were meant to be, not what your adult sorrow has made of you.”

He reached out his small, warm palm to Thomas.

“Here, touch it. There are no holes here. There is only life. Feel my heart—feel how it beats. It’s alive. This is the heart of your friend.”

Thomas cautiously touched the boy’s fingers. The skin was smooth, warm, and smelled of that same cedar from Joseph’s workshop. In that moment, the last fence in Thomas’s head collapsed. Then he himself fell to his knees, burying his face in Yeshua’s shoulder, and for the first time in many years, he sobbed. Not from grief, but because his world had finally become simple and clear again. Just like in childhood.

The days of the “True Game” were drawing to a close. Dany-Yeshua knew: the door he had opened with his “death” could no longer be shut. But it was time for him to return—back in the True World, he was long overdue.

On that last day, he gathered his friends on a hillside. The sun was scorching, but a cool breeze always wafted around the boy, like the air from an open window on a sweltering afternoon. The people were waiting for a farewell sermon, solemn oaths, or at least some strict commandments for the future.

But Yeshua simply jumped onto a large flat boulder and gave a wide, roguish smile. In his eyes danced those same sparks that Thomas and Andrew remembered from their games on the dusty streets of Galilee.

“Hey!” he shouted over the roar of the wind. “Don't you go getting lonely without me. And don’t you dare cry, do you hear? We’ll see each other soon. Catch you later!”

And then began what the KD would later describe as a majestic procession into the clouds. In reality, it was much simpler—and much more fun.

He didn’t slowly drift upward with a somber face. He just... pushed off from the rock, as if he were jumping from a rope swing into a clear, crystalline lake. Only

instead of falling, he soared. As he flew, his body began to lose its density, becoming translucent and radiant, as if he had turned into a pure beam of sunlight.

Before the eyes of hundreds of people, the boy simply vaulted toward the zenith. It wasn't a slow, solemn procession; it was a swift ascent, light and daring. It looked as if he were simply racing up an invisible ladder, laughing and waving goodbye to those left below.

A second later, nothing remained in the sky but a dazzling white streak, slowly melting into the blue. People stood with their heads craned back and mouths agape. The Collective Devil was already feverishly scrambling for words to pack this "unauthorized exit" into the confines of a canon, to add angels with trumpets and a heavy dose of fear. But those standing on the hill knew the truth: their best friend had simply gone home. Like a boy. Traveling light.

Yeshua's friends guarded his memory like their dearest treasure. But the Collective Devil could not leave things be. No sooner had the last person who'd seen Dany face-to-face closed his eyes, than the swarm intelligence set to work. Rumors began to spread. Some called Yeshua a great teacher, others a prophet, and some—a lucky charlatan.

But in the end, thanks to the KD's efforts, the most preposterous idea of all won out: that an allegedly almighty being had entered the world to sacrifice himself to himself to redeem humanity from a concept of sin that he had created in the first place.

With this absurdity, the KD instantly alienated millions of clear-thinking people from Dany. They rightly saw such an act as the manifestation of an unstable, maniacal mind—something that in no way fit the image of the Creator of the Universe. It simply never occurred to them that the Creator could be truly kind, sensitive, and even vulnerable. That he is not an architect of dogmas, but a Boy who wants to be friends.

Imagine this: yet another bearded man in a lavish church fervently beats his chest. He crosses himself before a gilded icon, falls to his knees, thumping his forehead against the floor, and rises again, mumbling: "Help me, Lord!" He repeats this exercise over and over, hoping to wear the "old man" down with his whining—praying he'll give in, not out of friendship, but out of sheer importunity.

At that moment, a young boy in a faded T-shirt timidly taps him on the shoulder.

"How can I help, mister?" he asks softly.

The man throws a vicious, irritated look at the child. Then he falls face-first onto the parquet again. He won't accept help from a boy. He isn't addressing Dany; he's talking to the invented tyrant he's so used to seeing in his fantasies.

The pious hypocrites love to repeat with a breathy sigh: "God is unknowable! The Lord moves in mysterious ways!" And for them, He truly is unknowable. Because it's impossible to know the pompous, meaningless drivel they've built around their own faith. They can't take a single step without grandiose speeches that hide a total vacuum.

But for those who have kept their sincerity, everything is different. And who is the most sincere in the world? Children, of course. For them, Dany is an open

book. They understand him instinctively. They feel what scientists only cautiously peer at through the lenses of microscopes. This is the secret that Dany hid from the wise and revealed to babes. Because babes don't build fences. They simply open the door and go out to play.

Information about the True World never fully left us. It leaks into our "world of sorrow" in thin trickles that we've come to call Art.

Have you noticed why movies with simple plots and inevitable happy endings are so dear to us? Adult critics call it "primitivism" or "escapism," but in reality, it is genetic memory. In Dany's world, a happy ending isn't a literary device; it's the only law of nature. There, if even one person grows sad, their grief never goes unnoticed: the entire planet, friends both near and far, immediately respond to support and warm them. It's impossible to be alone in your sorrow there. And when we watch a feel-good movie, we are simply returning home for an hour and a half.

Dany even tried to make our stay here easier by passing his technologies down to us. Few people realize it, but he was the one who invented the Internet.

In the True World, these are pure streams of data that allow friends to always be together, even from opposite ends of the planet. Dany's Internet is a way for loving souls to never be apart—to play shared games and feel each other's warmth across any distance. It was intended to be a great unification.

Through his "initiated"—men like Sir Tim Berners-Lee and Robert Cailliau—Dany passed this technology into our world. He hoped it would at least slightly ease the lot of those languishing in the "world of sorrow" against their will, giving them hope and helping them find their own.

But the Collective Devil could not allow such a triumph of unification. In Dany's world, the Internet was and remains a realm of reason and empathy. In the world of the KD, however, it instantly transformed into a menagerie of madness. Trolling, cyberbullying, hatred—the swarm intelligence quickly learned to use the conduits of love to spread its poison. Instead of uniting souls, the technology began to splinter them into camps, building new, digital fences.

Dany watched all of this and simply shook his head in sorrow. To him, it was all so obvious.

"Children are the real people," he told me quietly that night. "And adults... adults are just what is left of them once the KD has finished its work."

Chapter 13

I sat there, white-knuckling the edge of the table. My brain was melting. All my adult ideas about logic, space, and time were bursting at the seams like old clothes I'd long ago outgrown.

"Wait..." I managed to get out, staring at Dany. "If you're here, in my kitchen, eating chips and chatting with me... then who's minding the store? Who's running the galaxies? Who's making sure the atoms don't just fly apart? Did you just leave the universe on autopilot?"

Dany gave a cheerful snort and hopped off the stool.

“Autopilot? Seriously?” He walked over and touched my forehead with cool fingers. “Look. Just don’t close your eyes.”

The world around me bleached away in an instant. The kitchen walls turned transparent and then vanished altogether. I saw the True World. There was a piercing blue sky and a massive, multicolored trampoline in the middle of a flowering meadow. And there was Dany. He was jumping with other kids, shrieking with laughter. He was literally glowing with happiness—for around him were real friends, not those pious hypocrites who thump their foreheads against the floor.

“This is one of my avatars,” Dany’s voice whispered right in my ear, back here in the kitchen. “Which is to say—it’s ME. Do you understand? I am here, talking to you, and I am there, jumping on a trampoline. At the same time. These aren't different beings; it’s all just one me. Everything you say to me, that boy in the sky knows the very same second. Look!”

At that moment, the boy on the trampoline in the other world suddenly froze in mid-air, looked directly at me through space, and gave a cheerful wave.

“See? I just waved to you from another world,” said the Dany standing beside me.

I watched, spellbound, through the wide-open window of reality. Out there on the sun-drenched meadow, the long-haired, brown-eyed Dany hopped lightly off the taut mesh of the trampoline onto the soft grass. His friend, a younger lad, was completely absorbed at the roots of a sprawling tree, trying to untangle the line of a box kite, noticing absolutely nothing.

Dany got a mischievous glint in his eye, quietly looked around, and began sneaking up on the boy on his tiptoes. Seizing his moment, he swooped in like a hawk, locked one arm around the boy's torso, and covered his eyes with the palm of his other hand.

“Dany!” the boy cried out, instantly recognizing those palms, and jumped up and down, trying to break free.

Dany pulled his hands away and skipped backward with a laugh:

“Bet you wouldn't have noticed me if I hadn't shown myself!”

“Oh come on, you used your magic tricks again so I wouldn't hear you, didn't you?” the boy gave him a playful shove in the ribs.

“No way! Seriously, honest. Total fair play, I just walked quietly.”

“Where were you hiding anyway? We were supposed to meet by the creek.”

“Oh, just around,” Dany smiled conspiratorially and winked somewhere out into the open—right toward the invisible window in space where I stood frozen. “Helping a buddy write a book.”

“What buddy?”

“Doesn't matter.”

“Yes it does! Tell me—who?”

“Nope.”

“Tell me!”

“Seriously, it’s not import— Ow!!!”

The boy grinned wickedly, lunged for Dany’s waist, and began mercilessly tickling him, knowing all too well about his friend's ultimate weakness.

“Zack, cut it out! Ahahaha, okay, that's enough!” Dany doubled over.

“No way. Tell me who you were helping?”

“Ahahahahaha, just this human guy! Seriously, stop! Hahahahaha…”

“What guy?”

Dany tumbled onto the lush grass, laughing hysterically, but Zack wasn’t about to give up. He immediately straddled his friend, continuing the relentless assault on his armpits.

“Ahahaha, mercy! Zack, I’m warning you, I can also... Ahahaha... I can do it too... Zack, get off me!”

And there He was—the One who had forged an infinite Universe, who had spent billions of years steering colossal galaxies and igniting supernovae—rolling around on the grass, utterly failing to protect his armpits from the fingers of an eight-year-old boy triumphantly sitting on top of him.

Finally, Zack ran out of breath and paused, and Dany seized the opening immediately.

“Zack, you know, I happen to be a champion tickler myself!”

And with those words, Dany twisted around with a sudden burst of agility, grabbed Zack by the waist, and together, locked into a chaotic ball of energy, they went rolling down the gentle green slope, filling the entire meadow with loud, unstoppable childhood laughter.

Dany, sitting across from me at the table, went quiet and gave a soft chuckle, as if he could still hear the distant echo of that laugh. I, however, couldn’t tear my eyes away from the sun-drenched meadow in that invisible window of space.

Out there, down by the very edge of a crystal-clear riverbank, the grass rustled with thick, juicy stalks. A giant river crab, about the size of a watermelon, rolled out leisurely from the dense brush toward the boys sitting by the water. Its shell shimmered with a deep azure hue, and its powerful claws were folded neatly against its chest. It walked right up to the boys and froze. Then, one of its massive walking legs let out a quiet, dry snap and cleanly detached from the joint, without a single drop of blood, settling onto the emerald grass.

The crab tilted its shell forward slightly, looking up at the boys with its tiny, bead-like eyes as if checking to see if they had accepted his gift. At the site of the severed leg, a clean, smooth, pearlescent membrane was visible, under which a barely noticeable bud of a new limb softly and rhythmically pulsed. Once satisfied that his offering was noticed, the giant turned around and walked back into the water with a heavy rustle.

“Whoa!” One of the boys scooped up the heavy, hefty leg, balancing it in his hands with some effort. "Look, there’s at least half a kilo of solid meat here! Should we build a fire?"

“Let's do it by the old willow, there’s plenty of dry wood there!” another boy chimed in cheerfully.

I turned a stunned gaze toward the Dany sitting across from me in the crumb-spattered kitchen.

“By tomorrow morning, he’ll have a new leg, ” the Creator explained calmly, a faint smile on his face. "And it’ll be even better and stronger than the old one. You

see, for the crab itself, this is an important, necessary process of tissue renewal. And for the boys, it's a delicious meal. In my True World, there is a total, absolute symbiosis between all living creatures, and not a single shred of parasitism. No one devours anyone in secret, no one takes life by force. It's only in your world of sorrow that, because of entropy, everything became brutally simplified, hardened, and turned into an endless chain of killings just for the sake of survival."

"But that's not all!" he continued. "I am here, and I am there, and at this very moment—as a disembodied spirit—I am at the far edge of the universe, further than any of your telescopes could ever see. And there, in that unthinkable distance, I'm watching two quasars merge into a single giant black hole. Now that is a sight—if only you could see it! And that is also me."

"Wait, stop..." I clutched my head. "My brain is about to explode."

"Aha, and that's only the beginning!" Dany was really on a roll now, his eyes burning with excitement. "I am present everywhere—not just in space, but in time as well. For you, there is a 'yesterday' and a 'tomorrow,' but I am in all times simultaneously. And in all parallel realities at once. And there are so many of them that your language doesn't even have names for numbers that big!"

"No way..."

"Impressed?" Dany stuck his nose in the air proudly. "If you must know, I count to Graham's Number when I can't sleep at night!"

"Hold on, you actually sleep?" I frowned, trying to reconcile these unfathomable scales. "And how on earth can anyone with a mind like that ever come down to earth? How can you play games with the other kids? You have boundless power. You physically know every single move ahead of time in any game, so shouldn't you win every single time? What's the fun in that?"

"Playing with ordinary kids is actually the easiest and most fun part," Dany smiled. "But some of my brainiacs in the True World can honestly give me a headache sometimes. Take Stevie Hawking, for instance. That boy over there is just crazy, in the best way possible. No, he doesn't try to prove to me that I don't exist anymore. But you should see our arguments about cosmology! He's constantly running up to me, and whenever he wants to sound extra convincing and nerdy, he starts mimicking his old electronic, robotic voice just for kicks: 'Why. Is. This. Constant. Set. This. Way?' But then he gets so carried away that he forgets the act, switches to his normal voice, and starts rattling off at total top speed: 'If you tweak it like this, gravity will fit perfectly into the Standard Model! Sure, then we'd have to fix the weak interaction too, but it's totally worth it!' I'm so tired of explaining to him that I've tried all of that a million times, and it turns out awful. I've run through ten to the thousandth power of those universes, if not more, so I should know. So ordinary soccer on the grass is a total lifesaver. It doesn't work like that at all in games! The whole point of the game is knowing how to limit yourself. When I'm sprinting down the field with the ball on an attack, my avatar possesses the strength and agility of a completely ordinary ten-year-old boy. I'm far from the best player on our team, by the way—I still need tons of practice! And when we face off in board games, I also deliberately shut off my avatar's knowledge of the hidden cards or how

many points will drop on the dice next turn. I never cheat. Honest. Otherwise, it's just boring."

He suddenly lowered his voice:

"But people have always tried to cram me into their stunted logic. Long ago, I came to a village in the form of a child and started playing with the local kids. At the same time, I was there as an adult man, speaking with the elders. Then both of my avatars—the child and the man—walked up to the people and explained that we were actually one and the same."

Dany gave a cheerful snort:

"And they write it down as: 'We beheld a youth with his father, and they said: I am the God that is.' I patiently try to explain that I can have as many avatars as I like, and even without them, I'm present everywhere as an unseen spirit. But they just scratched their heads and wrote: 'God is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.'"

Dany paused for a split second, then narrowed his eyes with a sly look. The space of the True World around us shifted with a gentle sway, and we were instantly transported to a coast drenched in blinding sunlight.

It was Indonesia. The air was thick with the scent of blooming plumeria and ocean freshness. Under a boundless turquoise sky, right on the snow-white sand at the very edge of the azure water, tanned boys dashed around with joyful shouts. They were launching massive, incredibly vibrant kites shaped like mythical birds and dragons into the heavens. Among them, tightly gripping the spool of twine, ran another boy—a local, Asian lad dressed in a light, white shirt.

"Dani! Dani, tarik!" one of the tanned boys shouted loudly, waving his arms frantically toward a massive kite that was dipping down toward the water.

Mid-stride, the boy in the white shirt froze. He slowly turned his head and looked right at me. Through a completely different reality, his gaze pierced straight through me, and within his eyes flashed those exact same familiar, lively sparks. The boy gave me a cheerful wink and quietly spoke a phrase in an unfamiliar tongue, which echoed in my thoughts in Dany's crystal-clear voice:

"Well now, do you believe I make it in time to play with everyone?"

The image of the ocean dissolved in a flash. I blinked and found myself sitting right back in our old kitchen. Dany sat across from me on the countertop, swinging his legs happily.

I shook my head, trying to restore order to my thoughts after seeing that coastline.

"But you gave people absolute freedom to choose who they want to be," I said, looking at Dany. "It wouldn't be fair if, after death, you just stepped in and forcibly turned every single person into a twelve-year-old boy. What about the ones who genuinely came to love their adulthood?"

Dany nodded in agreement, his expression briefly turning very serious.

"Of course. That would be unfair," he answered simply. "That's why, alongside our True World, there is another one—the World of Adults. That is where the people who never did anyone any harm in life live, yet who consciously chose to remain adults. Just an adult world, but entirely free from the Collective Devil,

illnesses, and all that stuff. With their complex logic, philosophy, quiet maturity, and order. I respect their choice. I don't visit that world very often, allowing them to live exactly the way they want, free from my childish noise and chaos. They have earned their peace."

"What about here, on Earth?" I asked, staring into the bottom of my empty mug. "Have you visited other people like this? Just showing up in ordinary kitchens?"

"Of course I have," Dany propped his chin on his fists and gave a cheerful squint. "But very few adult descendants of Adam can take me seriously when I appear in my true form. They immediately look for hidden cameras, call the cops, or blame it all on stress and delusions. But there are pleasant exceptions. Who do you think James Barrie copied his Peter Pan from?"

"Alright, that makes sense," I said, gradually coming to terms with the rules of this magnificent Game. "But how are the children's worlds set up? The kids from the trampolines, the ones from the out-of-town buses, and the boys from that Indonesian beach—do they just live apart? In isolated little pockets of your world?"

"Why would they do that?" Dany arched his eyebrows in surprise. "They're friends! And friends are supposed to visit each other. They travel all the time. They gather in massive groups, board incredibly awesome, silent trains that streak through rainbow canyons, or load onto pristine ocean liners the size of an entire city. And off they sail to visit the kids on other continents."

Suddenly he leaned forward, and a mischievous glint danced in his eyes once more.

"But do you want to know the funniest part? Picture me waving goodbye to them at a train station on one side of the world as the train pulls away. They're traveling, goofing off in their compartments, drinking tea. And then, somewhere in the middle of a deep forest, at a tiny snow-covered whistle-stop, the train slows down for just a minute. The carriage doors fling open, and in I hop—flushed from the cold, carrying a mountain of huge boxes. I slam them down on the table and go: 'Hey guys, brought you some fresh pizza, straight out of the oven. Dig in, don't mention it!' And when the train finally pulls up to their destination, the doors slide open—and standing right there on the platform with a 'Welcome!' sign is... me again! Yep, it is absolutely impossible to hide from me. I am the one saying goodbye, the one waiting, the one riding alongside, and the journey itself. They absolutely love it."

I opened my mouth to ask something, but he was already leaning in.

"And you know what?" The boy wouldn't quit; he was clearly loving the effect he was having on me. "Those people who will read your story about me in the future... the ones holding this book right now, or staring at a screen... I'm standing right beside them, too. And if they really want to, they'll feel my hands on their shoulders right this second. Can you feel it? Yeah, I mean you. Now hold still for just a second. Can you feel my breath against your cheek? You can, can't you? There, now you know for sure that I'm right here."

He gave a cunning squint, looking right through me, straight into the eyes of the future reader.

Dany suddenly jumped up from the stool and pulled me by my sleeve toward the kitchen window.

“Look out the window!” he whispered impatiently, as if he were about to show me a secret treasure. “See there in the east, almost at the horizon? Those two bright stars? This time of year, you can only see them right before dawn. Only for a fleeting moment.”

I squinted, peering into the indigo gloom.

“I see them.”

“And next to them—another one, but very dim. Just a tiny speck of light.”

“Like a dot, just a little lighter than the sky?”

“Yes, yes!” Dany beamed. “Well, around that star orbits a planetoid. It’s shaped almost perfectly like a heart. Can you imagine?”

I couldn’t help but smile. “No way! That’s impossible.”

“Aha!” Dany waved his arms, trying to trace the shape in the air. “Usually, they’re all boringly round, or shaped like potatoes. Irregular shapes in space are a rarity; you almost never run into them. But that’s just how it happened here. In times immemorial, two dwarf planets collided at high speed. Part of their matter was knocked into the abyss, but their cores fused into a single object. The result was a heart-shaped pendant, but the size of a small country.”

He pressed his nose against the glass, leaving a small fog of breath on the pane.

“It happened by chance; I had nothing to do with it. And it even rotates in a clever way—almost exactly along the axis between the two halves. I’m right there at this very moment, on its ‘dark’ side, looking through the cleft of this massive heart at your Sun.”

“Wow...” I held my breath for a second. “And what does our Sun look like from there?”

“Like an ordinary yellow spark,” Dany shrugged. “But from that spot, it looks like part of your Big Dipper. Only from that angle, the Dipper isn’t a ladle at all—it’s a very complex, jagged polyhedron. Beautiful, honestly.”

“And can you see Earth from there?”

“I see everything,” he said, looking at me with that look of being very pleased with himself. “But with ordinary human vision, you couldn’t catch it from there. It’s too far, and your Earth—it’s so tiny and fragile...”

“And that heart... can it be seen from here?”

“No. It’s even smaller than Earth.”

I looked at the dim dot in the sky and suddenly felt like part of something grandiose, yet at the same time, completely cozy.

“Could you wave to me from there, since you’re there?”

Dany let out a ringing laugh that filled the entire kitchen.

“Hahaha! Well, I’ve waved! But you won’t see it anyway. And even if you had some kind of super-eye, you wouldn’t see my wave for another hundred and fifty years—that's how long it takes light to reach your Earth.”

“Still...” I felt a warmth spreading through my chest. “It’s cool—knowing that someone is waving to you from deep space right now.”

“If you want, I can wave to you from the Andromeda Galaxy!” he offered eagerly. “But light takes millions of years to travel from there. By the time it reaches you, I’ll have already come back and eaten all your chips again.”

“And could you do something with it? I don’t know... with the galaxy? Spin it faster so the sparks fly?”

Dany thought for a second, his expression turning serious.

“I could, of course. But why? The gravitational chaos would be—out of this world! It would mess with everyone in the local cluster.”

Dany hopped off the windowsill.

“Well, we’ve stayed up long enough. It’s time for me to go.”

I wanted to say something—to thank him or beg him to stay just one minute longer—but the words stuck in my throat. The boy just winked at me—one last time—and in that same second, the air in the kitchen trembled.

He didn’t leave through the door. He simply ceased to be here. One moment—and the stool was empty. Only that same branch with the golden fruit remained on the table, filling the entire kitchen with the unearthly scent of a Haziran garden.

I sat motionless, afraid to spook the silence. His laughter still rang in my head. Mechanically, I reached for my phone on the edge of the table. The screen lit up, and I froze.

The clock read 3:07.

I shook my head. That was impossible. We had talked for hours. He’d told me about Abraham, about the Universe, about Jerusalem... We had watched the pre-dawn stars together!

“It’s broken,” I thought, staring at the phone. “Or it just froze.”

I couldn’t take my eyes off the digits. And in the next second, right before my eyes, the seven flickered and changed to an eight.

3:08.

A chill ran down my spine, but this time it wasn't fear. It was pure exhilaration. I understood everything now. For that boy, time isn't a prison—it’s just modeling clay. Our hours-long conversation, which had shifted my entire being, hadn't lasted even sixty seconds in this world of sorrow. He had simply pried the moment open, letting me into his Eternity for one brief minute.

I looked out the window. There was only inky darkness. No dawn, no stars of the "Great Polyhedron." Just an ordinary night in an ordinary city.

But in my hand was the bakkurot fruit. Warm, juicy, and perfectly real.

I picked up a pen, opened a clean notebook, and wrote on the very first page:

“Do you know what despair is?..”

Epilogue

I sat in the silence of my kitchen, breathing in the scent of the bakkurot. The fatal diagnosis still lay in the folder on the table, but it no longer held any power over me. It was nothing but a scrap of paper filled with the Collective Devil’s misprints.

Now I know how it all ends. There is no such thing as an easy death—the body will cling to this familiar world until its very last breath—but how wonderful it will be, at the very end, to see that familiar face once more.

I will close my eyes here and open them there. And the first thing I'll hear will be that ringing, slightly mocking voice:

"Hi! What took you so long? I've been waiting forever!"

I will smile, feeling the weight of the long years sloughing off my shoulders like dry chaff.

"So, shall we go?"

"Let's go, of course! The whole gang is already here," Dany will say, waving a hand toward the shining horizon. "I have so much to show you! I just figured out how to light up bright green stars that pulse in rhythm, as if to music. You'll be absolutely floored when you see the light show! And I also want to find a way to display movies right across the sky..."

Bubbling over with ideas, not letting me get a word in edgewise, he'll pull me along. To the sound of his eager, rambling stories, we will step out onto the streets of the True World, flooded with that eternal light that never stings the eyes. And at the very first intersection, I will falter.

"Listen... will I turn into a pillar of salt if I look back now? At that old life?"

Dany will stop and look at me with a touch of bewilderment.

"What for? Did you forget something there? Or is there someone you miss?"

I will search my heart. No pain, no resentment, no fear. Only curiosity, pure as morning dew.

"Not at all."

"Then why look back?" Dany will give a playful hop. "You know, I've never actually turned anyone into a pillar of salt. But it's a good analogy. When you leave a bad place for a good one, there's no sense dwelling on the past. Think about the future. We have a long one ahead of us now. Infinite, I'd say."

"Exactly!" I'll feel that twelve-year-old boy I'd hidden under a suit jacket for so long finally waking up. "Is it a long walk?"

"Walk? I've got a grav-skate just around the corner!" Dany's eyes twinkle with excitement. "Hop on the back; we'll be there in two minutes. Just hold on tight—I sometimes forget about inertia on the turns!"

And finally, I want to say this to you, my reader.

If there ever comes a moment when despair feels insurmountable, and the darkness around you seems impenetrable and eternal... If you feel that your "fence" has grown too high, just close your eyes and quietly ask into the void:

"Are you here?"

And believe me—he will answer. Perhaps not with thunder from the heavens or a letter in your mailbox. But you will feel a gentle breath on your cheek, or you will see that very heart-star in the window, from beyond which he is waving to you across the abyss.

Because God is just a boy. And he really hates it when his friends are sad.